



Coming of age : an assessment of the status of adult education methodology in museums  
by Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education  
Montana State University

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**Abstract:**

Museums are natural providers of educational services for diverse audiences. However, little is known about how museums effectively serve adult audiences through museum programs. Likewise little is known about the methodology upon which adult education programs in museums are based. This study investigated museum educators' understandings of adult education principles and how they use adult education methodology in their design of museum education programs as measured by their responses to the survey instrument that included the Principals of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) (Conti, 1985). The purpose of this study was to survey museum educators to assess the types of formal adult museum programs taking place, to delineate the predominate teaching styles used by museum educators with adults, and to determine how principles of adult education are used in program design and planning.

Data from this study revealed that almost all museums offer programs for adults; however, the primary clientele for museum programs is children. Standard adult programs include lectures and guided tours. Yet, even though most museum education efforts are aimed at children, there are some museums that are implementing more innovative teaching strategies, such as gallery demonstrations, dramatic presentations, and discussion groups that are well-suited to adult learner needs. Cluster analysis indicated that there are two distinct groups of museums, one of which is child-oriented; the other is adult-oriented. Within both groups, there are educators that are receptive to the principles of adult education. The child-oriented museums are most closely aligned to schools, however, whereas adult-oriented museums have developed links with adult community members.

It is recommended that seminars be created and conducted by museum professionals for museum professionals on how to launch and maintain a robust adult education program in a museum setting. These types of seminars should be conducted in collaboration with experts in adult education. Both groups of professionals have a great deal to learn and share with each other. Adult educators can assist museum educators by explaining the theory upon which their successful practice is based.

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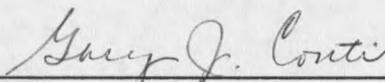
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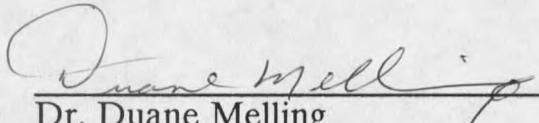
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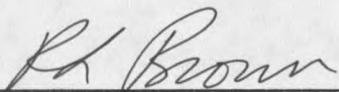
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## ABSTRACT

Museums are natural providers of educational services for diverse audiences. However, little is known about how museums effectively serve adult audiences through museum programs. Likewise little is known about the methodology upon which adult education programs in museums are based. This study investigated museum educators' understandings of adult education principles and how they use adult education methodology in their design of museum education programs as measured by their responses to the survey instrument that included the Principals of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) (Conti, 1985). The purpose of this study was to survey museum educators to assess the types of formal adult museum programs taking place, to delineate the predominate teaching styles used by museum educators with adults, and to determine how principles of adult education are used in program design and planning.

Data from this study revealed that almost all museums offer programs for adults; however, the primary clientele for museum programs is children. Standard adult programs include lectures and guided tours. Yet, even though most museum education efforts are aimed at children, there are some museums that are implementing more innovative teaching strategies, such as gallery demonstrations, dramatic presentations, and discussion groups that are well-suited to adult learner needs. Cluster analysis indicated that there are two distinct groups of museums, one of which is child-oriented; the other is adult-oriented. Within both groups, there are educators that are receptive to the principles of adult education. The child-oriented museums are most closely aligned to schools, however, whereas adult-oriented museums have developed links with adult community members.

It is recommended that seminars be created and conducted by museum professionals for museum professionals on how to launch and maintain a robust adult education program in a museum setting. These types of seminars should be conducted in collaboration with experts in adult education. Both groups of professionals have a great deal to learn and share with each other. Adult educators can assist museum educators by explaining the theory upon which their successful practice is based.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Today it is widely understood that each museum has an "educational responsibility to the public it serves" ("Standards," 1990, p. 78). This educational role is recognized both within and outside the museum community. In the same context, adults in America are looking for opportunities to learn as "the baby boom generation has matured into a group of adults with high levels of formal education and a firmly instilled desire to continue their intellectual growth" (Munley, 1986, p. vii). These adult learners are looking to alternative educational resources in ever-increasing numbers, and museums are a natural provider of educational services to these audiences. However, little is known about how museums effectively serve adult audiences. Likewise little is known about the methodology upon which adult education programs in museums are based.

On one hand, there is a prevalent attitude within museums that supports the idea that the "expansion of museum audiences and of public financial support over the last two decades would seem to give little cause for alarm about the perception museum professionals have of adult

learners" (Balfe, 1987, p. 20). Although adult Americans are entering museums and participating in museum programs in record numbers today, there are also some compelling arguments for caring more about adult experiences in museums. By paying more attention to adult experiences in museums, museum educators may be able to entice a greater number to bring their friends to the museum, become regular museum visitors, or join as museum members. Adults harbor the financial resources to make museum programs profitable in a time of diminishing government support. Adults too hold political clout that can be used to the advantage of museums.

The current number of adult programs offered by museums or ratio of adult programs to children programs is not known. In one of the only studies done of museum program options for adults, Mary Hyman (1976) noted that with regard to science centers "80% of all educational programming reported is for children, 20% for adults" (p. 8). This evidence she stated would clearly indicate that the "science centers have justifiably been considered 'children's museums' by the general public" (p. 9). Hyman also discovered that lectures were the most prevalent form of adult programs in museums. These types of programs, however, allow for little interaction and active learning. On the other hand, discussion groups, "one of the most accessible and informal types of adult programming" were offered least frequently (p. 22). Her findings are

consistent with those of Merriam and Caffarella (1991), who argue that the "andragogical model of instruction has not been used much in actual practice. Adult learning in formal settings, for the most part, is still instructor designed and directed" (p. 26).

Little work has been done in the museum field to ascertain where the optimum learning situations are created in museum programs for adults. Staff evaluations often assess museum programs in "relation to formal education programs," and, as a result, museum "students' are assumed to be children or adolescents, or treated as if they are" (Balfe, 1987, p. 20). All too often, adult programs in museums are designed based on formats that have been created for success with school-age students. Adult needs are not always recognized as being distinct from children's. This might well be linked to the lack of experience that some museum educators have had with adult education programs or the lack of training some museum educators have with adult learning theory and methodology.

A review of the past 10 years of program presentation topics at the American Association of Museums (AAM) meetings, other conference proceedings, and articles published in the Journal for Museum Education revealed little material that focused on adult education methodology and its implications in practice at museums. This void is acknowledged by several sources. Adrienne Horn (1979) conducted a study comparing

touring methods for adults. She noted at the time that she found no other published studies regarding teaching methods used for museum tours with adults (p. 87). Little has been published since then, but that which has appeared has aided many museum professionals.

Many institutional evaluations of visitor use of exhibits have added to the field's knowledge of how adults approach different display elements. They indicate that adults frequently backtrack among displays, visit the same exhibit component more than once, and are engaged in exhibits with a social component. Museum evaluations such as described by Ferguson (1994) have also shown that adult groups frequently split up in exhibits to explore on their own. Many similar case-study evaluations have been conducted, and this data, which is both published and unpublished, has helped institutions shape the way exhibit elements are planned, designed, and organized.

The same evaluative techniques are more infrequently utilized and published with regard to formal or informal museum adult education programs. Those that do exist tend to be case studies or descriptions of programs occurring at a single institution, and they offer little analysis as to what the results mean for museum education in general (Mims, 1982, p. 4). The problem may well lie in the fact that while there are countless excellent adult education programs ongoing in museums, all too often the program administrator or educator does not have the time to write up an

analysis of the teaching strategies employed or of the student experiences. The problem may also be that museum educators do not view themselves as researchers but rather as active practitioners.

Another possibility is that adult programs are not a priority of many museums and, thus, they choose to focus their efforts on children. The result, however, is that there is little information available to museum educators regarding effective adult education practices in museums.

Many questions beg to be answered about what the museum profession knows about what kind of learning experiences adults prefer in museum education programs. What is an excellent museum program for adults? What teaching strategies are employed? How is adult education methodology used when designing and planning museum programs? Are museum educators aware of their teaching style? Where are museum educators learning to improve their programs for adults? How can this information be used in combination with that which makes museums unique to contribute to adult learning?

While there is increasingly more research being conducted in the field of adult education, almost all is studied in formal learning settings. Few scholars have looked at adult programs in more informal settings such as museums. Without doing so, "much adult education research lacks a research-to-practice application when deciding what problems and questions need to be investigated" (Dale & Conti, 1992, p. 1). A better

understanding of informal adult learning activities might help professional adult educators to facilitate learning more effectively both in natural social settings and in more structured environments" (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982, p. 153). A better understanding of adult learning experiences in museums may also cause adult education theories to be revised to fit museum settings. Conditions for learning in museums may be markedly different and require a specific forum. They may even warrant their own learning theories.

As Gertrude Hornung (1986) notes, "Art museums have been recognized as sources for curriculum development but one of the museum's weakest areas is in its relationships with people, particularly with adults and adolescents" (p. 26). This statement could be true for all museums. This dearth exists in part as American museums are still in the early formative stages of evaluating adult audience experiences in museums. However, now is the time for museum professionals to be concerned and prepare to change the way they view adult programs in museums. Museums must recognize that adult participation is important to the future well-being of the institution. Thus, the scarcity of research on adult education in museums is deserving of attention.

### Problem Statement

To fully maximize adult learning experiences in museums, museum professionals need to understand the basic tenets of adult education methodology and their personal orientation toward teaching adults. Currently, there is a scarcity of information published presenting a theoretical background for adult education in museums, and few opportunities are available to assist museum educators to assess their orientation toward the use of adult education methodologies.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to survey museum educators to assess the types of formal adult museum programs taking place, to delineate the predominate teaching styles used by museum educators with adults, and to determine how principles of adult education are used in program design and planning. Data from this study were used to describe the status of adult museum programs in the United States, the types of behaviors museum educators exhibit when teaching, and how well they utilize principles of adult education in learning situations.

### Research Questions

This study investigated museum educators' understanding of adult education principles and how they use adult education methodology in their design of museum education programs as measured by their responses to the survey instrument that includes the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) (Conti, 1985). Five primary research questions were asked through the survey:

1. What types of formal educational programs are presently designed and planned for adult audiences in museums?
2. What are the strategies or behaviors most often used by museum educators when teaching adults?
3. What teaching styles do museum educators support based on PALS?
4. How familiar are museum educators with principles of adult education?
5. What relationships exist between museums based on types of programs, demographic variables, and acceptance of adult learning variables?

### Significance of the Study

As museums react to the societal demand for lifelong learning opportunities, museum educators will undoubtedly be re-assessing their audience's needs and altering programming accordingly. This study may aid museum educators as a group to understand what needs to be done to move toward creating better teaching experiences aimed at adults to consequently improve adults' learning experiences. Better understanding of effective teaching strategies and adult learners can enable museums to look at their educational resources in new ways. They may be able to organize their programs, improve teaching and subsequently learning, and capitalize on their investment in education. Success is achieved when adult educators meet three distinct sets of needs and goals--that of the individual, institution, and society (Knowles, 1970, p. 22). Lasting programs of worth emerge when the museum's mission, vision, educational philosophy, and methodology all merge.

Serious investigation of the ways museum programs are designed for adults and the ways adults best learn in them is needed to document the impact of museum education and reveal how it can be more effective. Museum education "needs to build its own substantial base of scholarly research with which to explain and justify its practices as well as to substantiate and promote new ideas" (Mims, 1986, p. 4). Knowledge

about museum educators' understanding of adult education methodology could be used to suggest the implementation of professional workshops, discussion groups, or forums. This information may also be used in the planning of workshops for all museum staff on identifying teaching style or philosophy or effective teaching and learning strategies for adults. Such knowledge can be used to help assess museum programs for adults and suggest ways that adult educators might improve their teaching strategies or teaching style.

#### Definition of Terms

Adult: "A person who has reached the maturity level where he or she has assumed responsibility for himself or herself and sometimes for others, and who is typically earning an income" (Hiemstra, 1976, p. 15).

Adult Education Program: Primarily denotes "short term learning experiences that are responsive to learner needs and are implemented outside of the traditional educational system" (Grotelueschen, 1980, p. 82).

Learning: "Learning is a change in human capability that can be retained" (Grinder & McCoy, 1985, p. 22)

Formal Learning: Formal learning occurs as a result of a planned activity that people engage in to broaden their knowledge or

experience. Formal learning programs include lectures, classes, field trips, workshops, and tours.

Informal Learning: Informal learning is self-directed and occurs all the time both consciously and unconsciously through observation and experience. Informal learning programs in museums include interaction with floor demonstrators, exhibits, or activity cart facilitators.

Methods: Methods are "the ways in which people are organized to conduct an educational activity, such as travel groups, study groups, discussion groups, or independent study" (Hiemstra, 1976, p. 69)

Museum: A "museum is an organized and permanent non-profit institution, essentially educational or esthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which own and utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule" (American Association of Museums [AAM], 1973, pp. 8-9). Art, history, and natural history museums, science centers, zoos, arboretums, botanical gardens, and historic homes all fall within this definition.

Teaching Strategies: The activity through which the teacher or learning facilitator assists the adult student in acquiring new knowledge or skills. Of all the activities described in previous literature, the term strategy relates best to the term technique as described by

Verner. It is through specific strategies, selected by the facilitator, that the learner or participant becomes involved in the formal learning process. If the strategy is effective, the participant should be stimulated to continue learning in the future (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989, p. 5).

Teaching Styles: The instructor's "distinctive qualities of behavior that are consistent through time and carry over from situation to situation" (Fisher & Fisher, 1979, p. 245)

## CHAPTER 2

## RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of adult education methodology as it applies to museums requires an examination of adult education principles as defined through research and a review of museum education programs as they pertain to adults. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first includes an examination of the characteristics of adult learners and current theoretical framework surrounding adult education. The second section reviews museum programs for adults. It includes a discussion of the current trends in museum education pertaining to adults and the involvement of museum educators in creating adult programs.

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Adults "need and want to learn" (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989, p. 2). They "engage in an educational activity because of some innate desire for developing new skills, acquiring new knowledge, improving already assimilated competencies, or sharpening powers of insight" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 11). While several studies suggest all adults are learners, very few participate in formal adult education programs (Tough, 1979).

Better-educated adults with stable financial resources are more likely to participate in adult education opportunities than other segments of the population as noted by Johnstone and Rivera (1965) and Aslanian and Brickell (1980). This participant profile is the same for museum visitors (Hood, 1981).

Demographics reveal that in America today there are more adults than youth, and these adults have attained more education than at any other time in history (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 6.). As the extent of "previous education is the single best predictor of participation in adult education, the rising educational level of the adult population is a contextual factor of considerable import" (p. 8). However, this education is often highly-specialized given the demands of the workplace, and many adults lack a general liberal understanding of the sciences, arts, and humanities.

Adults too are living longer and as a result have different learning needs at different times in their lives. Developmental psychologists have shown that, while all individuals are different, there are some generalizations that can be made about adults learning interests in different stages of life. For young adults (ages 18-35) there is a need to establish themselves in work and at home. For middle-aged adults (ages 35-55) new found interests are common in health and civic activities, having established the basic family and professional relationships. For

older adults (ages 55 and over) there is a pattern of interest in culture and their living memory as they enjoy new leisure time. These stages have also been referred to as "seasons" by Daniel Levinson (1977). As he notes, "There is the idea of seasons: a series of periods or stages within the life cycle. The process is not a simple, continuous, unchanging flow. There are qualitatively different seasons, each having its own distinct character" (p. 6). As adults mature through life experiences, they are more receptive to different types of learning experiences at different times in their lives.

Economics is also influencing the characteristics of adult learners. The information age, the dependence on other nations for goods and services, and the rapidly changing nature of jobs requires adults to acquire more knowledge and a diversity of skills over a lifetime (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 11). A growing number of adults are pursuing second and third careers in this economic environment. As workplace duties and responsibilities change, skilled, self-motivated, adaptable adult learners are able to make work-related transitions easier.

### An Overview of Adult Education

Adult education encompasses a wide variety of programs servicing a plethora of adult needs. It has been described as "large and amorphous" without set boundaries such as age or mission (Merriam &

Caffarella, 1991, p. 62). In general, adult education encompasses a variety of experiences aimed at improving the skills, knowledge, and abilities of adults after their formal schooling is completed. Some adult education experiences consist of formal programs designed to provide training to receive or renew a specific certification, others provide social experiences, and yet others are geared to those adults that participate in learning experiences simply to broaden their understanding of the world around them (Houle, 1961). Many are self-directed (Knowles, 1975). Adult education experiences have traditionally emphasized applied knowledge rather than theoretical and the acquisition of skills instead of the knowledge of facts.

Merriam and Caffarella (1991) have divided adult education programs into three types of learning activities: formal, non-formal, and informal. Formal learning experiences are provided by universities or schools and usually lead to a degree or certification. Non-formal learning experiences are organized by institutions outside of the formal school network. Churches, libraries, and museums all fall under this group. Informal learning experiences are self-directed and are often derived from day-to-day experiences. There are not well defined barriers, though, between the three groups. As seen today, some formal programs are offered by non-formal institutions and vice-versa. For example, it is not uncommon for a museum to offer a class for college

credit, an informal learning demonstration, and a volunteer discussion all within the same day.

Providing meaningful educational opportunities for individuals that embody a diverse range of interests, feelings, attitudes about learning, and abilities is unquestionably challenging. Adult programs that satisfy all adults' expressed needs are exceptional given the diverse characteristics that are found within a group. However, with good planning, adult programs that are appropriately presented can pique adults' interests, inspire learning, and realize a measure of excellence.

#### Adult Needs in a Learning Experience

Research conducted in the 1960s confirmed that adults bring a different set of problems to a learning situation. In 1961, Cyril Houle conducted a landmark study regarding what motivates adults to learn. From his research, he found that adults have three learning orientations: goal-oriented learners, activity-oriented learners, and learning-oriented learners. They tended to be grouped accordingly with the most motivated to learn when they needed to accomplish a specific task or goal and with the smallest group learning for learning's sake.

Over the past 40 years, the study of how adults learn has burgeoned to provide a wealth of information about adult needs in a learning experience. They have been proven to be qualitatively different

than children's. One significant study by Allen Tough in the early 1970s identified that much adult learning is self-directed (Tough, 1978). His survey of adults revealed that an average person conducts 7 learning projects in the course of a year with an average of 100 hours spent on each of these learning efforts. Tough (1979) found that 80% of these learning projects were undertaken independently of formal classes or programs. These learning experiences were usually set up by the learner in order to gain some new knowledge or skill. Tough noted in a public address given at George Washington University in 1977,

As you know, as with a real iceberg, the highly visible portion above the surface of the water is only a small fraction of the total bulk of the iceberg. The same is true of adult learning. The highly visible part that we have all paid attention to for years is the people learning in classes, courses, correspondence courses, conferences, workshops, and so on.

A landmark study conducted by Johnstone and Rivera in 1965 also showed that self-education was much more prevalent than anticipated (p. 37).

Generally, "self-directed learning" describes a process in which individuals take the initiative with or without the help of others in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, . . . and evaluating learning outcomes" (Knowles, 1975, p. 18). It does not necessarily follow a pattern similar to formal learning. Research by Spear and Mocker (1984) and Danis and Tremblay (1988) have

demonstrated that there are many variables, including circumstance, happenstance, and motivation, that provide clues about how adults learn on their own. While Tough's research suggests that pre-planning for these types of learning experiences is common, Danis and Tremblay found that few self-directed learning activities were done with a great deal of pre-planning. Evidence and understanding of adults as active self-motivated learners are especially important to museums. As informal resource centers, museums are dependent on adults' interest in learning and their subsequent motivation to seek out unique experiences.

Other research efforts have shown that many adults need to connect new ideas with those they have already mastered. This need to "crystallize intelligence" by making use of what has already been learned in many cases increases with age (Knox, 1981). For adults, "experience is a resource for learning and when experience is ignored, the adult perceives it as a rejection of him or herself as a person" (Knowles, 1973, p. 45). Roger Hiemstra (1981) has echoed the sentiments of Knowles in defining some of the basic tenets relating to adults that need to be understood when planning adult programs. His tenets, which are based on research findings, are:

- \* Intelligence does not decline with age.
- \* Adults learn rapidly when building from past experiences.
- \* Adults may have problems unlearning things, but are capable of doing so.

- \* Adults do not like competitive class situations.
- \* Many adults experience anxiety in new learning situations.
- \* Adults experience success in an active learning situation.
- \* The physical well-being of adults affects their ability to learn. (p. 63)

Adults also need to take responsibility for their learning (Knowles, 1975). As independent individuals, adults need to be able to direct experiences in ways that enable them to maximize the learning opportunity as identified by Knowles (1975), Merriam (1982), and others. While some adults are in a better position to take charge of their learning experiences than others, it is a common desire for adults to want to be in control of their learning destiny. In providing independence in a learning situation, adult educators are recognizing that "the primary focus of the learning process is on the individual, as opposed to the larger society" (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991, p. 27).

Adult learning tends to be life-centered, enabling adults to learn new skills that they can use. They are often interested in learning something they can use immediately. For adults, it is important that the learning experience be practical and applicable to their daily lives.

## Teaching Adults

Educational theorist Malcolm S. Knowles (1970) proposed that an adult model for learning (andragogy) shows that adults have a tendency to be self-directed learners who bring a rich resource to their learning in the form of their previous experiences. Hence for adult program planners, he perceives their role "as a dual one. First and primarily, they are designers and managers of the processes facilitating acquisition of the content by the learners. . . . Secondly, their role is to be content suppliers or resources" (p. 26). Andragogues, he notes, use more resources in their teaching than traditional teachers. He also argues that "when the principles of andragogy are translated into a process for planning and operating educational programs, the process turns out to be quite different from the curriculum planning and teaching processes employed in youth education" (Knowles, 1970, p. 54). He identifies a seven-phased process for implementing adult programs:

- \* The establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning.
- \* The creation of an organizational structure for participative planning.
- \* The diagnosis of needs for learning.
- \* The formulation of directions of learning (objectives).
- \* The development of a design of activities.
- \* The operation of the activities.
- \* The rediagnosis of needs of learning (evaluation). (p. 54)

In formal learning situations, Knowles (1970) and others argue that it is the teacher that plays the greatest role in creating the environment for learning (p. 41). The approach the teacher takes in the teaching-learning process has a tremendous impact on how adults feel about learning and their ability to accomplish learning goals. The power of the teacher in a learning situation cannot be underestimated.

Given adult needs in a learning situation, much attention has been focused on the most effective and appropriate approach to teaching adults. There are three generally-recognized methods of organizing these learning experiences: the teacher-directed mode, learner-centered mode, and collaborative mode (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989). In the collaborative mode, the emphasis is placed on "what the learner is doing" (Conti, 1985, p. 7). The teacher's primary responsibility is to facilitate student learning by letting the student set the direction and hence accept responsibility for it (Kidd, 1973). In the collaborative mode, adults have the ability to set their own learning goals (Knowles, 1970). They can also take responsibility for them. Paulo Freire's (1970) model for education is based on the collaborative approach. He regards the teacher as a person who stimulates the learning process through dialogue rather than the embodiment of knowledge. Arguing that education is not a neutral process, he proposes that teachers assist learners to identify and clarify problems and locate resources.

In a learner-centered environment, the learner actively participates in creating and directing the learning experience. The teacher serves as a facilitator who provides resources and ideas. Knowles consistently argues for a learner-centered approach to teaching. As Knowles (1980) states:

The ideal learning situation is when a group is small enough for all participants to be involved in every aspect of planning every phase of the learning activity. The teacher, of course, retains responsibility for facilitating the planning by suggesting procedures and coordinating the process. But conditions are likely to be right for this maximum degree of participation only in small courses, action projects, workshops, and club programs. With larger groups the ideal situation can be approximated, however, by imaginative use of subgroupings. (p. 226)

The teacher-centered mode, however, "is the approach most people visualize when they think of learning" (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989, p. 24).

In this case, the responsibility for planning learning experiences, selecting materials, and goals is felt to be solely the teacher's discretion. In teacher-centered experiences, it is the teacher that determines the learning objectives for each student.

Given these three broad approaches, the learner-centered and collaborative modes are often considered to be the most effective with adults (Conti, 1989; Smith, 1982; Tough, 1979). Others have argued for different approaches, depending on the support needed by learners.

Pratt (1988), for example, identifies four ways of looking at the teacher's role which ranges from a highly-directed teacher setting to a

learner-directed setting and which varies on the degree to which learners are capable of providing their own direction and support (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 26). Given the situation, the ideal mode may vary.

### Teaching Styles

It has been argued that "the behavior of a teacher probably influences the character of the learning environment more than any single factor" (Knowles, 1970, p. 41). Teachers bring to the teaching-learning process their own sets of values, beliefs, and attitudes relating to teaching and learning (Heimlich & Norland, 1994, p. 40). Furthermore, they bring a set of personal behaviors that the teacher demonstrates time after time that directly influence student responsiveness and learning and that are known as teaching style (Fisher & Fisher, 1979, p. 245). An individual's teaching style is "consistent for various situations" and distinguishes one teacher from another (Conti, 1990, p. 3). Teaching style is "defined by the internal qualities of the teacher that affect classroom behaviors" (Conti, 1989, p. 4). This style is a reflection of an individual's teaching philosophy. While it may be refined over time as one's attitudes and beliefs change, an individual's style is generally predictable and stable.

Individual teachers demonstrate different teaching styles. While each style is not mutually exclusive, teacher behaviors can be generally

grouped so as "to understand and perhaps explain certain important aspects of the teaching-learning process" (Fisher & Fisher, 1979, p. 254). Teaching style is determined by a variety of factors including a teacher's experience, personality, philosophy, perceptions of learners, and background. A "knowledge of one's own style can allow the teacher to better understand how each of these has contributed to his/her overall behavior in the classroom" (Conti, 1989, p. 7). It can make a difference in how one approaches a group of learners.

A valid and reliable tool for measuring teaching style is the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS). PALS was developed by Gary Conti (1979) and is based on principles of adult learning. It was designed specifically to measure "the degree to which adult education practitioners accept and adhere to the adult education learning principles that are congruent with the collaborative teaching-learning mode" (Conti, 1982, p. 1). The collaborative mode provides for an equal partnership between the teacher and learner in the learning experience.

The PALS 44-item instrument is a summative rating scale using a modified Likert scale. Through self-scoring, respondents indicate their preference for teaching based on a described action. The Likert scale allows adjustments for frequency, and scores can range from 0 to 220. The mean for the instrument is 146 with a standard deviation of 20.

The total score gives an indication of a teacher's expected behavior in a classroom setting. High scores on PALS indicate a preference for learner-centered teaching experiences while low scores on PALS are indicative of a preference for teacher-directed learning experiences. Scores in the middle are expected when both teacher-directed and student-centered approaches to teaching are used.

Through research, teaching styles have been proven to be related to adult achievement (Conti, 1985). Both teacher-centered and learner-centered teaching behaviors have demonstrated a high degree of success in different situations. In practice, Conti found that a teacher-directed approach was more effective in a GED class. Students had better success with the GED examination when the teacher-directed approach was employed. However, with Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, the learner-centered approach was more effective. In the tribal colleges, both approaches were effective and consistency was a key factor.

As recent research has shown that teaching style makes a difference in student achievement, it is important for teachers to be aware of their teaching style and its effect upon their audiences. Conti and Wellborn (1986) argue:

The secret to improving student achievement is not just in identifying the unique characteristics of each student such as learning style, but rather it includes a thorough analysis by

teachers of their behaviors and the consequences of their actions. More importantly, it demonstrates the importance of practicing a teaching style which consistently treats adults with dignity and respect. (p. 23)

Self-examination is not only important for individual educators, but also for the profession at large. All too often, "teachers, as a group are not able to clearly state their beliefs about teaching" (Conti, 1990, p. 79). Some of the basic questions that need to be addressed include: "What is our [my] view of the nature of the learner? What is the purpose of the curriculum? What is our [my] role as a teacher? What is our [my] mission in education?" (p. 79).

### Teaching Strategies and Methods

While the teaching style of an educator can be predicted from situation to situation, teaching strategies are altered by the educator depending on the circumstance. Teaching strategies enable the program planner to organize a group in such a way so as to maximize the learning experience. Different teaching strategies have proven to be more effective with different groups of adults or individuals. Clubs, discussion groups, or classes may create a better learning arena for smaller groups; lectures or symposiums may be more effective for larger groups.

Different methods may be used within a given situation. Small group sharing and active hands-on learning experiences can easily be created in

a small group setting. While lectures are predictable teaching strategies used with large groups, the methods a lecturer uses may vary from situation to situation.

The teacher has a varying amount of control over the program using these various strategies. For example, in a lecture the speaker has total control over the program. Teaching strategies where the teacher has a great deal of control include lectures, symposium, and demonstrations. The teacher has less control when using such strategies as a dialogue, debate, or interview (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989, p. 54).

While the adult literature suggests that adults prefer those strategies that are more learner-centered, each type of teaching strategy has its own strengths and limitations. Lectures meet the needs of those adults who prefer to listen rather than discuss and are relatively easy to plan.

Demonstrations, on the other hand, are not as easy to develop, but "they can convince those who might otherwise doubt a thing could be done" (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989, p. 68).

With smaller groups of adults, other types of teaching strategies may be employed. In addition to those listed above, it is possible to create what Seaman and Fellenz (1989) call "action" and "interaction" strategies, which can be described as teaching activities that require active learner participation. Action strategies include simulation games, role playing, case study analysis. Interaction strategies include

discussions, participatory training, committees, and "buzz" groups. All of these teaching strategies utilize the teacher as a facilitator and require most members of the group to take part in the learning experience in order for it to be successful.

### Adult Learning

Recent research on adults has focused more on adult learning than on program planning. The field has expanded to embrace the study of how and what adults learn and other factors that influence adult learning as studied by Kidd (1973), Brookfield (1986), Fellenz and Conti (1989), and Dale and Conti (1992). It has been argued that there are three factors influencing this trend toward adult learning research. They are "the continued development of the concept of andragogy, the struggle with the concept of self-directedness in learning, and increased emphasis on learning how to learn" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. vii).

Learning is shaped by many factors including the teacher, his or her teaching style, the teaching strategies employed, the environment, abilities and receptiveness of the learner, and time. As Seaman and Fellenz (1989) noted, "One cannot discuss learning without considering the people involved and how their personal characteristics, that is, needs, background experiences, competencies, goals, learning styles, and

attitudes, affect their learning" (p. 7). Learning has been referred to as a "constructive process" as a result (MacKeachie, 1988, p. 10).

Most educators agree that adults learn in different ways and, thus, optimal conditions for one learner may not best serve another. This argument supports the notion of providing a wide variety of experiences and teaching strategies so as to serve the greatest number of adults in the best possible environment. Learning style theory recognizes that adults learn in different ways but purports that these variations can be grouped to explain general optimum learning situations for different kinds of adults. There are many different ways to group learning styles relating to cognitive, affective, and physiological modes (Reiff, 1992). For example, Bernice McCarthy's (1986) 4Mat System of Teaching-Learning Styles identifies four major types of learners:

- \* Type One Learners perceive information concretely and process it reflectively. They learn by listening and sharing ideas.
- \* Type Two Learners perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively. They like facts and detail.
- \* Type Three Learners perceive information abstractly and process it actively. They are skills oriented and learn by doing.
- \* Type Four Learners perceive information concretely and process it actively.

All four types of learners have been found to be equally present in a group. Her learning style instrument like that of Gregorc's (1979)

measures the way individuals think and how they process information. They focus on how the mind works.

Other cognitive-based learning style inventories measure the speed to which an individual resolves problems or identify the ways that individuals prefer to process information. For example, the Barbe and Swassing (1979) test measures individual preferences for processing information visually, auditorially, or kinesthetically. The test reveals that where one individual may recall information better when presented orally, others may recall information better when they can read it. The idea of multiple intelligences, pioneered by Gardner (1992), shows that individuals have a range of intelligences, some of which are more dominate than others. His intelligences include bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

Affective-based learning style theories illustrate how different individuals approach learning situations psychologically. While some adults appear to use emotions in a decision-making process, others are more logical and practical. The differences can be tested using the Myers-Briggs Inventory (Myers & McCaulley, 1990). Psychological learning style theories focus on the environment for learning, the physical needs of an individual, and whether there is a preference for learning

alone or in a group. The Dunn and Dunn Learning Style instrument tests for preferences in this area (Dunn & Dunn, 1978).

Learning styles are a factor to consider when selecting appropriate teaching strategies for a given situation. This basic format may well serve as a good basis for creating educational programs in museums and exhibits. For teachers of adults, it requires an understanding of how they learn themselves, their teaching style, and how they can select different teaching methods or strategies to meet the needs of different types of learners in an exhibit or classroom setting. It is known that "adults with certain learning styles prefer different teaching strategies" (Seaman & Fellenz, 1989, p. 52). For example, Cawley, Miller, and Milligan (1976) found that "the more analytic learner tends to be more sedentary, sees a teacher as a source of information, prefers complexity, is achievement oriented and competitive and prefers social distance" (p. 104). By contrast, a kinesthetic learner prefers to have an active, hands-on role in the learning experience. If "learning is directed only toward one type of learner, the others are not receiving the message" (Gunther, 1990, p. 290).

### Museums and Adult Learners

Museums are educational centers that use objects as a basis for teaching and learning. They provide a rich resource for numerous learning opportunities including self-directed contact with objects, meeting spaces for engaging intellectual and social experiences, a context in which to mark changes in the natural and cultural world, and forums for new ideas and for experiential learning activities. In America, there are many different kinds of museums. Art museums, history museums, natural history museums, science centers, zoos, arboretums, botanical gardens, and historic homes all fall within this definition and today play significant roles in the learning experiences of many Americans.

As Joel N. Bloom and Ann Mintz noted in 1992, "the increasing importance of informal learning in our lives has led us to emphasize the broad educational significance of the museum visit" (p. 73).

Excellent museums and museum programs can arouse visitors' interest and inspire them to continue learning after the experience. As John Cotton Dana, founder of the Newark Museum, wrote almost a hundred years ago,

A good museum attracts, entertains, arouses curiosity, leads to questioning and thus promotes learning. It is an educational institution that is set up and kept in motion--that it may help the members of the community to become happier, wiser, and more effective human beings. Much can be done toward a realization of these objectives--with simple

things--objects of nature and daily life--as well as objects of great beauty. . . . A museum can help people only if they use it; they will use it only if they know about it and only if attention is given to the interpretation of its possession in terms they, the people will understand. (Newark Museum, 1959, p. 9)

Museums can inspire learning in many different ways, whether it is through permanent and temporary exhibitions; written materials including newsletters and magazines; public programs including classes, lectures, film series, demonstrations, docent tours, concerts, and conferences; or outreach electronic tools including video tape, World Wide Web home pages, or CD-ROM. Museums are also places "to which people can bring their art and artifacts, their ideas, their events, thereby creatively contributing to the museum program or exhibitions" (Oppenheimer, 1983, p. 16).

There are over 5,000 museums in the United States. While many American museums have a long and rich history, the majority are relatively new institutions. Only 4% were established prior to 1900. More than 75% were established after 1950, and 40% of those came into existence since 1970 (Museums Count, 1994, p. 24). This recent boom reflects a growing national interest in alternative learning environments such as museums, clubs, and training centers. It also denotes a rapid expansion of positions in museums for professional researchers, administrators, educators, and fund raisers.

Many people choose to visit museums frequently. American museums attract more than 500 million visits per year; this is the equivalent of two visits per American per year (p. 33). However, while many people visit often, it is also known that others do not.

Adults enter museums voluntarily. They enter "asking questions that emerge from every part of experience, sifting unknowns and uncertainties, sorting their weights and values" (Carr, 1990, p. 70). They come with a host of previous experiences that they can integrate or add to their museum experience. Some enter with expectations based on what they have read or heard about the museum experience.

Information picked up through an exhibit or program must be assessed with reference to an existing body of knowledge.

Adult museum-goers span the range of educational levels and learning styles. However, national studies have shown they tend to be well educated with professionally-oriented occupations and higher than average incomes. They also tend to be civic-minded individuals that like to participate in a wide variety of cultural events and educational experiences (Gunther, 1990, p. 157). For adults that choose to visit museums in their leisure time, there are six key motivators that have been identified: the opportunity for social interaction, the need to do something worthwhile, a comfortable environment, the challenge of new experiences, the opportunity to learn new things, and the chance to

actively participate (Hood, 1983, p. 51). In a 1981 museum audience study conducted in the Toledo metropolitan area by Marilyn Hood, frequent museum visitors identified the three most important reasons to visit a museum as the opportunity to learn, having a challenge of new experiences, and doing something worthwhile in leisure time (p. 54). These motivators are similar to others identified in successful adult learning experiences as identified by researchers such as Houle (1961) and Brookfield (1986).

#### Museum Education: Formal or Informal

Museum education is often classified under the rubric of "informal education," "informal learning," or "nonformal education." These terms help to distinguish museums from schools, which can be defined as "formal education." However, more distinctions can be made to distinguish museums experiences in and among themselves.

"Informal learning" in museums is self-directed. For visitors, it occurs all the time, consciously and unconsciously, through observation and experience. It does not "necessarily involve instruction" (Madden & White, 1982, p. 39). Informal learning in museums includes such activities as interaction with exhibits, self-guided tour programs, floor demonstrators, or activity carts facilitators.

The more "formal education" experiences usually occur as a result of a planned activity that people engage in to broaden their knowledge or experience. Museum-sponsored lectures, film series, classes, field trips, workshops, and pre-arranged tours fall within this category. Participation in these formal programs requires advance planning on the adult's part. These programs also usually have a finite beginning and end.

#### A Historical Review of Museum Adult Education Programs

American museums have been recognized as "centers for education and public enlightenment" for almost 100 years (Alexander, 1978, p. 11). Early educational efforts on the part of museums involved providing informational labels for objects and training interpreters or "docents" to enhance visitors' learning experiences primarily for school children. Museums provided educational opportunities for those that had few available to them and educational options for those out of formal schooling. To improve access to museums, in the 1880s New Yorkers petitioned the Metropolitan Museum of Art and American Museum of Natural History to open on Sunday so that working men could visit (Newsom & Silver, 1978, p. 14).

By the turn of the century, Henry Watson Kent, assistant secretary of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, developed and advertised a

complement of educational programs included gallery lectures, publications, programs for school-age visitors, and radio programs. In 1907, Benjamin Ives Gilman of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston hired a docent to lead one-hour interpretive tours. Many museums, including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and Cincinnati Museum of Art allowed local adult groups to use museum space for programs and club meetings. The "impulse inside the museums was matched by a late-nineteenth century impulse on the part of the American public that spurred the establishment of lyceums, Chatauquas, reading groups, clubs for middle- and upper-class women, settlement houses, scholarly and professional societies, mechanics' institutes, and even country fairs" (Newsom & Silver, 1978, p. 14).

Museum education programs reacted too as Americans experienced an increase in leisure time and access to automotive transportation over the ensuing decades. Lawrence Coleman described the burgeoning of small museums in 1927:

Numerous historical House Museums and Trailside Museums of natural history or archeology, closely related to their location, expected the motorist on the expanding highways. They represented a trend toward small museums outside urban centers and were harbingers of new ways of adult education in an era of more plentiful leisure. (p. 260)

In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), labor unions, and private foundations such as Carnegie and Rockefeller, assisted and

encouraged museums nationwide to offer programs specifically for adults. For example, WPA funds paid artists to teach workshops and classes in museums on a regular basis, the Syracuse Museum provided workshops for men on relief, and the Metropolitan Museum began to focus gallery programs on the unemployed. The Depression also encouraged some museums to provide free admission so unemployed persons could take advantage of the subsidized adult programs (Grinder & McCoy, 1985, pp. 13-14). As more and more Americans began to visit museums, the educational value of them was recognized. When the Museum of Modern Art opened in November of 1929, it was considered by the trustees and director to be "an educational institution" (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, p. 205).

In the 1940s, following the end of World War II, museum education programs expanded as men returned from war and women sought interesting volunteer positions in museum education programs to occupy themselves. The primarily volunteer staff led tours and programs aimed at children. The post-war era had a tremendous impact on museum education, however, as museums changed to thrive in a market economy. Museums started to look at their audiences and change their programs to a mix that the museum "customer" wanted (Zeller, 1996, p. 50).

Museums experienced a heyday in the 1960s and early 1970s as prosperity, increased leisure time, and burgeoning government support enabled new museums to be founded every 3 days. At the same time, museum education efforts expanded and improved as national awareness of diversity among cultures, disabled access, and women's issues translated into multi-varied internal and outreach programs designed to serve a wide variety of audiences. Museums also began to organize programs that serviced non-museum goers or those otherwise unable to come to the museum. They were creating programs that adhered to a stronger sense of social responsibility. In 1967, the American Association of Museums (AAM) urged the development of expanded educational services that brought in "new and nontraditional audiences" (p. 14). However, even with these changes, museum programming continued to be heavily oriented toward children's needs.

In 1973, the American Association of Museums created the Standing Professional Committee on Education to provide a voice for those in the field of museum education within the larger context of museums. In 1976, the committee sponsored "Learning Theories Seminars" and encouraged museum educators to record and publish their experiences with programs and visitors in museums. This was the impetus for several publications. A publication dealing specifically with adults, Museums, Adults and the Humanities, was published by the

American Association of Museums in 1981. It was the result of a series of seminars held in 1979-1980 which featured acclaimed adult educators including Knowles, Knox, and Hiemstra among others.

In the late 1970s, national attention was drawn to the fact that Americans were enjoying increasingly longer life expectancies. Museum audience surveys also revealed that few older adults visited museums. For these reasons and others, there was a burgeoning during the late 1970s to early 1980s of new museum programs created specifically for older adults. For example, the Smithsonian through its Senior Series program took on the task of providing services to older adults that could not travel to the Smithsonian. The staff's experience with these outreach programs revealed that "informal lecture discussions combined with object handling, demonstrations, activities, and personal chats" (Sharpe, 1984, p. 3) were critical to a successful experience. They noted that acknowledging participants' experience was essential to success as was adapting the program design to meet different needs. This report provided some of the first published findings suggesting teaching strategies for adults in museums based on practice and research. Presentation techniques that had proven to be successful with older adults were published in the Museum Education Roundtable Reports in the fall of 1984.

The Brooklyn Museum, "proud of its firm community roots and of its response to community change," also created a model outreach program for older adults during the late 1970s (Heffernan & Schnee, 1981, p. 31). They offered a series of programs in neighborhood senior centers that varied from slide lectures to art classes. Many programs were led by museum volunteers that the staff trained to be responsive to the "cultural recreational, intellectual, and physical needs of older adults" (p. 32). A review of the program showed that "the most significant result of the program was the creative artistic expression that it generated, particularly on the part of senior citizens not usually involved in arts activities" (p. 32). Another museum program offered by the Lyceum in Richmond, Virginia, was "designed to teach Alexandria's history . . . by encouraging older adults to share their life experiences" (Sharpe, 1984, p. 10). In this outreach program, the program presenters showed slides, passed objects through the audience, and invited audience members to share their recollections.

In 1984, the AAM-appointed Commission on Museums for a New Century completed a report on the importance of museums to American culture and what they contribute to the quality of human experience (Museums for a New Century, 1984, p. 11). The report cited the need for museums to get involved in educational reform efforts and admonished museums not to relegate education departments solely to the

service of school children. Specifically with regard to adult education, they noted:

- \* Adult participation in educational programs has increased significantly. Adult education is the fastest-growing type of education today, and education is the most common adult discretionary activity outside of the home.
- \* Thirty-five percent of all students enrolled in higher education are more than 24 years old; 70 percent of those are part-time students.
- \* Midcareer training programs have increased in popularity.
- \* Education is regarded as one of the many commodities competing for the consumer dollar. Educational establishments are increasingly asked to deliver custom-tailored products on demand. They are asked to be accountable and to revise programs to meet the needs of consumers. (p. 25)

In general, they concluded that "informal, voluntary education is gaining credibility as more and more people, especially adults, look for ways to improve their skills, increase their personal knowledge or simply enjoy their more abundant leisure" (p. 25).

Following the 1984 AAM annual meeting, a colloquium of educators met to discuss what Museums for a New Century meant for museum education. Participants looked to a major change in "museum education as a shift in focus from programs and activities for school groups to larger issues concerning all aspects of museum learning" (Jensen & Munley, 1992, p. 357).

One of the most significant adult education demonstration projects in museums was sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation from 1982-1988.





































































































































































































































































