

Natural Connection between Museum Libraries, Education, and Visual Literacy

Seattle Art Museum's Ann P. Wyckoff Teacher Resource Center (TRC)

Metropolitan Museum of Art's Nolen Library

March 9, 2016 1:30 - 3pm

Anna Elam, TRC Librarian/Educator

Anna Allegro, Manager of School & Educator Programs

Lindsay Huse Kestin, Museum Educator for Teen, Family, & Multigenerational Programs

Leah High, Public Services Librarian Watson & Nolen Libraries, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Outline of talk

1. Convo with Anna and Lindsay
 - a. Strategies for collaborations
2. Leah on picture books for visual literacy and art appreciation
3. Brainstorming
4. Q&A

Warm up with Sociometrics - Get up!

Align - strongly agree/medium agree/medium disagree

- "I feel good about my partnerships with my educational program at my institution"
 - example from strongly agree: Library affinity program, works closely with adult programs, successful Wikipedia edit-a-thon, edible book project, presentations to docents
 - example from strongly disagree: new in position, solo, so far disconnected (her role falls within art history department)
- "I feel like I have a strong understanding of how my library's resources can fit with an educational program"
 - example from strongly agree: no volunteers
 - sort of agree: reluctant volunteer - has good connection to her collection, anticipates their reference questions, but not sure if they successfully reach out
 - outstanding outreach program but can't figure out how to get in, "rubber wall", not sure what they need in serving them
- "I feel confident reaching out to education staff to help put on a program"
 - ex from N/A: works for a corporate library
 - ex from disagree: has handle on how resources can help with any program esp docent, but less so with teenagers, who are vast majority of education program

Natural Connections Part 1, Anna speaks re: SAM's TRC:

- Anna's role falls within museum's education department (thus the initial active learning)
- Show of hands - audience is split between museum, academic, other (samples of other professor, grant making, visual resources, gallery, museum consulting firm librarian)
- Explanation of TRC

- free lending library, small collection of 3500 items, books, DVDs, etc that support all three SAM sites (not exclusive to SAAM even though that's where TRC is located)
- Potential challenges of Anna's role - Part-time position, rest of education department is downtown, she has a different schedule from them (M-F vs Th-Sat)
- Examples of programming - Suitcase program, education object collection (used to be in suitcase collection), ARTStor subscription for educators to access through TRC, Educator Resource Lists (sample Kehinde Wiley)

Anna Allegro, Partnering with School & Educator Programs

- Department within broader education division
 - Manages volunteer docent program (all sites, school, public, and private tours - 20,000)
 - Works with educators
 - Educator resources can be exhibition-based resources, collection-based lesson plans, suitcases
 - Programs - workshops and trainings
 - School partnerships - many in Highline School District, PDs at school, school visits to museum and museum visits to schools, attempt to connect with programs
- Education Object Collection
 - Sample is tea objects
 - multi-sensory for low/no vision visitors (bamboo whisk, dry tea)
 - docents can reach out for this collection to borrow for anticipated tours
 - Anna has direct connection to docents with this
 - Educator Resource List, in collaboration with Traci Timmons' bibliographies which can veer more academic
 - Diker Collection – Anna Elam prepared document addressing stereotypes about Native American cultures. Put together one-page for docents addressing these stereotypes, encouraging discussion, fostering cultural awareness
 - Outreach suitcases - include objects, lesson plans, suggested art activities, "bring museum to schools"
 - Questions from audience
 - How many docents? 120
 - Where do suitcases fall in terms of institution and insurance? Completely separate, not "museum quality" because full intention is for kids to be able to handle

Lindsay Huse Keston, Partnering with Kids and Family Programs

- Out of school K-12
 - Teen Night Out
 - Collaborate with Anna through SAM Camp, 3 weeks for children entering grades 1-5

- Work with teaching artist based on what's on view in permanent collections and exhibits
- Outside time a necessary part of day to shake out some energy
- Story-time - Anna finds books that fit themes of camp in real time - themes are picked day of (ex: yoga, *Michael Recycle* and then kids create super hero costumes for Planet Earth).
- Overarching themes are
 - Global Culture
 - History and Art through Time
 - Environment
- Family Spaces
 - Education Gallery at SAAM - Anna curates a "library" for this space
 - The space and what is in it changes as collection changes
 - Chase Open Studio - drop-in space, speaks to current exhibition
 - ex: portrait gallery for Kehinde Wiley, supplemented by books
 - helps provide context and richer connection between bigger issues represented in exhibit

Anna Elam, Partners - Natural Fits

- Expanding audience for resources
 - Has been at museum for 9 years and at the beginning there was not much connection between TRC and the various spaces mentioned by Leah
 - Part-time position leaves little to no time for outreach
 - Currently, most of her time is on education programming
- Attempts to reach audience where they are, no visit necessary - attempt to facilitate "water cooler conversation" even though it doesn't naturally arise in how roles overlap
- Treats interaction with education staff as reference interview
 - what exactly do they need?
 - what type of resources do they expect?
 - Wants to make connection so that TRC resources are being used for multiple reasons
 - Ex: spurring on conversation with docents regarding Native American cultural awareness, *Do All Native Americans Live in Teepees?*
- Try not to make assumption that you know about your colleagues' intentions - really treat it like a reference interview - allows for more than only "educator" lense

Leah High, from The Met

- Picture books as tools for developing visual literacy and make connections to collections
- Picture book often first entry point into art appreciation
- Nolen Library open 7 days a week
- Visual Literacy - ability to construct meaning from visual images. Enable individual to find, interpret, evaluate, use visual media
 - Children learn from visual experience
 - Visual arts - can take form of art making or art interpretation

- Reading books starts this process of developing visual literacy because they encourage students to engage and discuss pictures
 - Picture books must have engaging story and appealing art
 - Picture books mirror, clarify, amplify or extend meaning of text... or subvert or change original meaning
 - Allow discussion/awareness of line, color palette, composition, where eye moves through a picture, space and color, perspective
 - ...just like when looking at a work of art in a museum
 - Leah gives samples from picture books and works of art
 - Reading picture books AND looking at works of art cultivates visual literacy
 - Toddler storytime, older children storytime, simple prompts that help children think about visual cues, then option for self-guided tours of gallery
 - Entry points
 - Visual (elements of art)
 - Medium (etching, collage, etc)
 - Cultural (clothing, geography, etc)
 - Historical/biographical
 - Thematic (connections to narrative content, characters, etc.)
 - Where to begin?
 - MET has created thematic boards on Pinterest (all of which will be available on a handout)
 - Amazing Animals (anthropomorphizes characters, inspired from works of art)
 - New York City (architecture, sense of place)
 - Stories and Legends
 - Art of Native North America (intro to cultural customs)
 - (intro to important historical stories)
 - Artist Biographies (fosters connection to an actual person and a specific work of art, learn about influence, artist's style)
 - Stories *connected* to an artist
 - Elements of Art
 - Color Theory
 - Shape, line, medium
 - Artist as author and illustrator - look at two side by side
 - Closes with prompt for audience - how will you discover your picture book connections?
- Wrap-up time for workshop, then time for general questions
- On your own (5 mins)
 1. Identify one education program already happening at your institution and a type of resource you have that might fit within this program
 - In Threes
 1. As a group, pick one of your programs and come up with a plan to connect the library collection to the program using a visual literacy strategy mentioned today.
 2. Identify one barrier that you may have to connecting your collection to this program and how you might work to overcome this.

- a. Share-out
 - i. Wikipedia-edit-a-thon - could use original library materials (or museum materials) to update Wikipedia entries
 - ii. New archivist has re-organized and found some things that could be used like SAM's suitcase program with local fashion/textile/business classes

Anna's closing thought

- These ideas are basic - involve resources that librarians already has but thinking more strategically by connecting more with colleagues

Questions from audience

1. Curious about history about these kind of collections at your institutions, and whether institution encouraged it
 - a. at the MET - children's museum/library dates back to 1940s in various incarnations. Nolen Library is 9 years old. Outreach into community - storytime since 1920s, although different gaps. Current storytime program is 6-7 years old
 - b. Anna from TRC - late 90s, separate grant-funded program outside of libraries. Anna is the first librarian to have position. As teachers got more access to internet, TRC needed to shift focus
2. To SAM - what you do with docents in terms of training them?
 - a. Anna Allegro - close relationship with librarians Traci and Yueh-Lin, and their bibliographies are great resources. Lindsey has worked at other museum libraries and finds SAM librarians to be strikingly welcoming and helpful to docents, volunteers, and public. Wiki for exhibitions, especially helpful for contemporary artists who might now have books about them yet.
 - b. Anna Elam - helps with ARTstor to varying degrees depending on their comfort level.
 - c. Traci - Feels like she's supplementing the training that educators give them prior to exhibition. Help navigate wiki, circulate DVDs, especially likes the freedom that is given to docents to pursue/focus more on works that resonate with them. Ex: with Kehinde Wiley exhibition, docents wanted to know more about one of the stained glass windows. Proximity has a lot to do with who work with whom (ie Anna is at SAAM, Traci is at SAM Downtown). Repeat emphasis on reference interview.
3. Do you have an overnight camp at the museum?
 - a. No, and not particularly being discussed. Teen Night Out and SAM Re-mix are the current evening events

Thank you and round of applause!