Visitor Experience Master Plan
2015-2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2014-2018 Cummer Museum Strategic Plan called for the development of an Interpretive Plan to identify strategies to provide a more enriching experience for visitors. This project was led by the Director of Education Lynn Norris, and supported by the Education Committee under Chair Sally Baldwin. In October 2014, the committee formed an Interpretive Plan Subcommittee which included Trustees from the Education Committee, Museum Staff, and Community Members. This subcommittee met in workshops and planning sessions to assess the institution’s visitor experience needs. The second part was completed with consultant Randi Korn of Randi Korn & Associates. Over time this work evolved from an Interpretive Plan to a Visitor Experience Master Plan encompassing the concept of “learning” throughout the Museum. In museums, learning is experienced by all ages throughout the institution. The term “education” has generally been restricted to programs for children. The final plan sets out three broad recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make a paradigm shift from education to learning
- Create an environment conducive to learning
- Implement learning that is intentional, has impact, and is measurable

VISITOR EXPERIENCE MODEL

If learning can happen for any visitor anywhere on the campus, how does the Museum make its campus conducive to learning? For the visitor experience needs assessment the subcommittee used John Falk & Lynn Dierking’s Visitor Experience Model, an end-user model that examines how visitors experience museums and what tools they need to get the most out of their visit. It divides the museum experience into three contexts that are filters for a museum visit: the Personal Context, the Social Context, and the Physical Context.

The Personal Context is often the most important factor, but is the one with the least available concrete information. Why has the visitor come? In particular, why has the visitor come on that day? These answers may be endless. Each person arrives with a personal agenda, expectations, and anticipated outcomes from the visit that are unique to that individual. Knowing what a visitor expects from a visit helps the Museum meet expectations and is a crucial step in developing targeted communications, so that visitors receive the information about what they can expect at the Museum. This is the key to visitor satisfaction.
once visitors arrive, the front line staff is crucial to helping them find what they want to see and do within the Museum to satisfy personal agendas.

The Social Context of a visit greatly influences the way the Museum is experienced. Visiting with a toddler, a good friend, or an aging parent are each very different experiences. Most visitors do not come alone, but with a group. Those who do come alone come in contact with staff, volunteers, and other visitors. Every visitor’s experience is strongly influenced by the Social Context. Visitors learn in the Museum by talking amongst themselves about what they see and experience, or by having a place where they enjoy being with others around educational content. The Museum aims to capitalize on these social interactions to promote learning and enjoyment.

Learning can only be achieved in the Museum if spaces can be reached by visitors, and are designed so that visitors want to stay in the space long enough for learning to happen. This is why the Physical Context of the Museum is so important. The physical context includes the architecture and landscaping, parking lots, wayfinding, the overall feel of the institution, its aesthetics, and the art contained within. Who could have predicted that the Museum’s parking lot would be the most talked about feature of its recent renovation? A consideration of Physical Context is why a focus was placed on improving the bathrooms, putting in doors that open easily, and installing new, safer railings in the Gardens. These are all enhancements to the Museum’s ability to provide an improved learning environment and make visitor pathways to Museum content easier and more efficient.

The Museum must identify how the visitor navigates these contexts so that it can determine how the visitor’s agenda aligns with the Museum’s content. This is the interactive experience. Putting in place tools to help facilitate the navigation of these contexts can prolong visitation and improve the likelihood of a return visit. To make this happen, all parts of the Museum must work together.

INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE

The constructed reality is unique to the individual. Whatever the visitor attends to is filtered through the Personal Context, mediated by the Social Context, and embedded within the Physical Context. Viewing the process in terms of interaction between visitor-constructed contexts can help us understand the choices visitors make.

A FOCUS ON LEARNING

• Learning is active and suggests a result
• Learning is interactive and it can happen anywhere and with anyone
• Museums as informal educational institutions have embraced learning to differentiate themselves from formal school environments
• Learning can be the result of a museum visit
• All visitors have the capacity for learning regardless of age
From the needs assessment created by the subcommittee, the following visitor comfort recommendations were made:
*Bolded items are an indication of improvement already in process

• Improve interior wayfinding and signage
• Create a cross-departmental Visitor Experience team to re-examine the roles of Visitor Services and Security
• Update bathrooms with baby changing stations
• Improve lighting in public spaces
• Provide more accessible Garden and Gallery doors
• Add new Garden railings
• Improve handicapped access to the Gardens
• Improve and add more seating campus wide
• Improve temperature control in public spaces
• Add orientation spaces for the main entry and Art Connections

At the end of the first phase there were two major recommendations:
• Make a paradigm shift from the concept of education to the more dynamic and fluid concept of learning
• Provide the infrastructure and visitor comfort elements needed institutionally to improve the current visitor experience

Once the Museum has spaces conducive to learning, what type of learning should take place? The subcommittee reviewed cutting-edge museum learning models, including those developed by the Columbus Museum of Art, Dallas Museum of Art, and Denver Museum of Art. From these, it was determined that learning should be intentional, impactful, and measurable.

Audience Evaluator Randi Korn joined the team and led the subcommittee through exercises using the Cycle of Intentional Practice, a tool frequently used in museums, including the Dallas Museum of Art. The Cummer Museum is using this ideal work cycle model on its path to becoming a learning organization.

**CYCLE OF INTENTIONAL PRACTICE**

There is a strong alignment between the Plan and Evaluate quadrants. The Reflect quadrant is where organizational learning takes place. Cycling what is learned in the Reflect quadrant into the next planning phase is where creativity and innovation can emerge.
As museums embrace this change, they consider their aims and goals through work with different audiences. The subcommittee and Randi Korn developed an Impact Planning Framework to serve as a guidepost for planning and decision-making, including the Impact Statement, distinct qualities of the Museum, and the desired outcomes and indicators for four distinct audiences.

### IMPACT PLANNING FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MISSION</th>
<th>To engage and inspire through the arts, gardens, and education.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT</td>
<td>Visitors experience the Museum as the place in Jacksonville where they actively experience art and gardens, explore relevant cultural issues, and feel art and life come together.</td>
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| AUDIENCE         | 1. Lifelong Learners  
                    2. Families  
                    3. Students on School Tours  
                    4. Special Populations |
| DISTINCT QUALITIES | 1. We are respected among our cultural peers for leading community collaborations.  
                             2. Our learning spaces and beautiful setting create “the place” where all can experience the Museum (i.e. placemaking).  
                             3. We connect collections to contemporary issues (for example, the environment). |

### DECISION MAKING TOOL

Use this tool to discuss collaboration requests, so that decisions can be made resonably based on the Museum’s internal resources and capacity.

| 1. **Audience**: Who is the target audience(s) for the proposed collaboration? Which aspects of the collaboration strongly align with the target audience? Which do not? |
| 2. **Mission/Impact/Outcomes**: Does the proposed collaboration support mission and impact? How does it support the mission and impact? Does it support at least two outcomes for two audiences? If not, consider whether pursuing the collaboration is in the Museum’s best interest. |
| 3. **Distinct Qualities**: Does the proposed collaboration accentuate two or more of the Museum’s distinct qualities? Which ones and in what ways? |
| 4. **Collaboration**: Does the proposed collaboration have reasonable expectations of the Museum with regard to capacity and resources to deliver? |
| 5. **Resources**: How will the Museum fund the proposed collaboration? Does it require new funding? Does it require additional staff or staff realignment? Which staff would be directly involved? |
LEARNING THAT IS MEASUREABLE

To make learning measurable, the subcommittee identified baseline outcomes, and developed key indicators for testing. Outcomes are defined as the intended results for a specific audience. Indicators are defined as the evidence of achieving outcomes.

OUTCOMES BY AUDIENCE

LIFELONG LEARNERS
• Gain new perspectives on familiar and unfamiliar concepts
• Find relevance between their experience at the Museum and their lives
• Feel respected for their knowledge

FAMILIES
• Seek out the Museum as a safe and accepting place to learn together
• Connect art to their personal experiences and everyday lives
• Choose the Museum to gather socially

STUDENTS
• Find relevance between their experiences with the Collection and Gardens and their everyday lives
• Learn about the connection between art and the environment through explorations in the Galleries and Gardens
• Find their voice around art and gardens and freely discuss/express it

SPECIAL POPULATIONS
• Feel welcomed and respected while having authentic and meaningful experiences
• Exercise social skills throughout their visit
• Experience the Museum and Gardens as their third place (a place other than their school/institution and home)
OUTCOMES BY SPACE

GARDENS

LIFELONG LEARNERS
• Gain new perspectives by connecting the Gardens to their everyday lives
• Gain new perspectives through interactivity in the Garden Learning Center
• Experience the Gardens through their senses
• Experience the Gardens as a re-energizing and inspirational environment where joy and healing can happen in a natural setting

FAMILIES
• Seek out Gardens as a safe and accepting place to gather and learn together
• Connect with nature and art in the practical design of the Gardens
• Experience the Gardens as a unique place to explore their senses

STUDENTS
• Find relevance between the Gardens and everyday life while connecting to the natural world
• Use all of their senses to actively explore and experience the Gardens
• Learn how to become better stewards of their environment

SPECIAL POPULATIONS
• Experience the Gardens as a place where they are respected and welcome
• Feel successful and important
ART CONNECTIONS

FAMILIES & LIFELONG LEARNERS
• Realize that Art Connections is a place where they can learn about art and gardens
• See Art Connections as a place to gather
• Experience a sense of discovery and newness while in Art Connections

STUDENTS
• Connect works of art in the Museum’s Collection or displays in the Gardens with the world and history
• Apply art and garden design concepts discussed in the Galleries or Gardens to their Art Connections experience
• Feel joy and excitement when interacting with others and the space

SPECIAL POPULATIONS
• Independently express themselves artistically
• Connect their Gallery and Garden experiences with Art Connections
• Feel joy and excitement when interacting with others and the space
INDICATORS

The outcomes have specific indicators used to measure learning. For example, these are indicators of how to measure learning by Families in Art Connections:

### FAMILIES

1. Families know the way they experience content in Art Connections is different from how they experience content in the Galleries and Gardens.
   - A family interacts with art and garden objects and concepts through tactile, audio, visual, and interactive components
   - Family members create art pieces either independently or together
   - Family members work together to solve a problem, play a game, or engage in another type of group activity
   - Family members engage in museum-directed and self-directed activities

2. Art Connections is a destination for families to gather together.
   - 25% of families intentionally meet up in Art Connections
   - 50% or more of families request directions to Art Connections upon arrival
   - 50% or more of families laugh, share stories, or use the interactives together

3. Families experience a sense of discovery and newness while in Art Connections.
   - 5% or more of families spend more than one hour in Art Connections
   - 50% or more of families visit three or more stations
   - 50% or more of families interact with staff, other visitors, or each other
   - 50% or more of families associate Art Connections with what they experience in the Galleries and Gardens

### ACTION PLAN

Visitor Experience Master Plan Action Objectives for 2016:

- Form an inter-departmental interpretation team to implement the framework outlined in this document to impact outcomes and indicators for interpretation in the Galleries and Gardens
- Form an inter-departmental visitor experience team to use the impact framework to assess visitor-staff interactions, wayfinding, marketing, and internal/external messaging
- Identify the steps for the renovation of Art Connections
PLANNING TEAM

PLANNING LEADERS
Sally Baldwin, Education Committee Chair and Trustee
Lynn Norris, Director of Education

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