"A Stroll Down Memory Lane": Museums Reinventing Programs for Older Adults

Jennifer L. Lowe

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.shu.edu/theses

Recommended Citation
Lowe, Jennifer L., "A Stroll Down Memory Lane': Museums Reinventing Programs for Older Adults' (1999). Theses. 117.
https://scholarship.shu.edu/theses/117
“A Stroll Down Memory Lane”: Museums Reinventing Programs for Older Adults

Jennifer L. Lowe
Dr. Jürgen Heinrichs, Advisor

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master’s Degree in Museum Professions
Seton Hall University

May, 1999
"A Stroll Down Memory Lane":

Museums Reinventing Programs for Older Adults

Jennifer L. Lowe
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One</strong>: Andragogy: Adult Teaching Practices</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong>: Educational Needs of Older Adults in Museums: Why and How Museums Should Serve Older Adults</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three</strong>: Case Studies: Museum Programs Created and Implemented for Older Adults</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would like to thank Claudia Ocello, Julie Chernoff, and Janet Rassweiler from the New Jersey Historical Society for the opportunity to learn from them. If it were not for the positive experience and support that I received from them, this endeavor would not have been possible. Dr. Jürgen Heinrichs has also provided me with the support and encouragement needed to complete this paper. My utmost gratitude and respect to you, Dr. Heinrichs. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my Mom, Dad, and fiancé, Mark for all of their love and support. I know I have been a pain!! If it were not for your unconditional love and encouragement I would never have made it.
Approximately two months before my college graduation, my Grandmother passed away. Devastated by this loss, my Grandfather felt that there was not much left for him to live for. Sickly himself, he attended graduation to see his last grandchild receive her Bachelor's degree. After this May event, my Grandfather came to my parents' home to stay for a week's visit. For the first few days he did nothing but sit in a chair and sleep. When he would awake, he hardly recognized where he was. After three days of watching my Grandfather partake in nothing but sleep, my family took him to participate in programs sponsored by the church which we attend. Although his mobility was limited and his hearing slightly impaired, he responded greatly to the interaction with others and was stimulated by the program that was presented. The remaining days of his visit were spent running errands, shopping, and participating in other church related activities. Upon his return home to an elderly community, he reverted back to his pattern of sleeping the days away until he eventually passed.

As this personal experience illustrates, the need for creative programs for older adults is of most importance. Older adults need to enhance their life-satisfaction and the best way to do so is through leisurely activities. Such activities stimulate the mind and body, contributing to "more positive attitudes and increased life satisfaction among elderly individuals." This thesis explores how museums can successfully serve the educational needs of the fastest growing age population, older adults. Underserved by

---

many institutions, including museums, older adults' quest for life-long learning and life satisfaction should be met. Chapter One presents the methods by which adults learn. This chapter outlines how to successfully meet the physical, environmental, and intellectual needs of older adults. Chapter Two explores how and why museums should serve older adult audiences. Museums are extremely potent educational resources. Through the use of their assets, including objects, and the fulfillment of older adults' physical needs, museums can provide wonderful educational programming. Chapter Three examines three case studies that were created and implemented for older adults. These museum programs provide useful information about the best techniques and methods to use when teaching older adults.

As time progresses, older American adults live longer as medical care improves. The ever-growing percentage of older people within society "compels a nation to be concerned with increasing both the life satisfaction of older adults and their potential for making creative contributions to society as a whole." An education system in museums that fosters creative thinking and new interests would lead to accomplishments that enhance self-concept and increase life satisfaction of older adults. As the population of older Americans expands, "museums must prepare for this population shift... [and] reassess who their priority audiences are, thus considering the needs of older adults, the fastest-growing age group."

---


“Older adults have a wealth of experiences, knowledge, skills, wisdom and time.... The creative potential of this segment of the population has remained virtually ignored. Older adults represent a steadily increasing reservoir of untapped resources we can no longer ignore.”

The potential contributions that older adults can make to society are enormous if activities and programs are available for them to do so. As demographics shift, the increase of older adults creates a demand for activities to exist for their quality of life satisfaction. In addition, older adults have larger amounts of disposable income. The need for learning among older adults has increased as people retire earlier, “are better educated and more oriented than ever before towards the leisure pursuit of reading and cultural activities.”

This relatively neglected age group can no longer be ignored by museums and other educational and recreational institutions as this population proceeds to expand.

Learning is a life-long process that has become the underlying principle for all education. Adult education derives from the need to fulfill life-long learning goals. Such learning is used by adults for self-development as well as interacting and working with others. People “continue to seek information and knowledge throughout their lives and museums play an important role in life-long learning.”

Museum educators have generally concerned themselves with educating school age audiences. “While museums have enjoyed continued success with school groups... there are other age groups and educational constituencies we know are neglected or

---


underserved. Museum educators have neglected older adults for many years. This may have resulted from the low museum attendance of older adults, hence the museum did not respond to this low attendance rate. There are numerous reasons why older adults may not attend museums: money constraints, lack of transportation, and physical disabilities for example. The resulting inaccessibility of the museum to older adults needs to be addressed. "Museums, like every other institution in our society, thrive to the degree that they make their resources available to the public." How then will the museum serve an audience they have been neglecting? How can museums serve an audience who may not be able to come to the museum? As museums begin to shift their focus toward serving the fast growing population of older adults, the museum's objectives must be clearly defined. Such objectives should include the extension of museum services to older adults in and around the museum area as well as the enrichment of the lives of elderly participants by providing intellectually stimulating activities. "Leisure education can help retired persons overcome feelings of helplessness by selecting meaningful leisure activities which promote competence, achievement, and recognition." Museum activities will encourage older adults to participate individually and interact with others. Because older adults may be unable to visit the museum, outreach programs should be developed.

---


The implementation of outreach programs will fulfill the museum's need to serve its elderly audience. Presenting the museum through slide programs, discussion, and hands-on activities in elderly-oriented facilities creates a comfortable zone for the participants who may not have visited the museum before. An introduction to the museum within the safety of the older adults' domain generates positive communication between the museum and its audiences. Once this communication has been established, the older adults' visit to the museum will be more comfortable. "[This] need for security includes the need for physical safety, but goes beyond this into the requirement of psychological safety – protection against threat to our self-respect and our self-image."\(^{10}\) With the ability of the museum to visit the elderly facilities, a bond of safety and respect is produced establishing a climate that will emanate throughout the environment of the museum during their visit.

"Without adult education, society loses the benefit of having an older population that is functioning at a higher level of intelligence."\(^{11}\) Since the percentage of older adults increases every year, the need to develop the capacities of older adults has become crucial. Museums can play a critical role in life-long learning by providing leisure activities that promote self-exploration and learning. Museums can meet older adults' needs for mental stimulation through programs providing interaction with others, the recognition of their own skills and knowledge, and the promotion of self-worth within each participant. Museums have the capabilities to serve an audience that is usually forgotten. As the demand for elderly programs and activities increase, museums should

---


\(^{11}\) Alpaugh, Birren, and Renner 31.
recognize and fulfill this audiences' needs. “Every museum has an educational responsibility to the public it serves. Museums offer a unique encounter with objects and ideas for people of many ages, interests, and backgrounds.”

12 Museums need to fulfill their educational responsibility and the needs of its older adult audiences for life-long learning.

---

Chapter One

Andragogy: Adult Teaching Practices

Andragogy evolves from the Greek derivation *aner* and *agōgos*; *aner* meaning adult and *agōgos* meaning leader. The term was coined during the 1960s when adult educators wanted a name to describe their teaching practices when speaking with others. While pedagogy focuses on teaching children, andragogy emphasizes the initiative and responsibility of the adult learner to be accountable for their own learning. Since adults have lived longer than children, they have amassed more experiences to draw upon when encountering and learning new content. “In adult education, we’re making proportionally more use of experiential techniques... that take advantage of the experiences of the learners and less use of transmission techniques – those that use only the experiences of the teacher.”

For museum programs to be successful, educators need to understand the way older adults learn. Andragogical processes, which are discussed in this chapter, outline how adults and older adults learn. This chapter also explores the importance of meeting the educational and physical needs of older adults through a sensitive and accommodating environment. Educators need to adapt andragogical processes with an understanding of the physical and mental needs of older adults. As adults become older,

---


14 Knowles, “Andragogy” 32.
they experience declines in hearing, vision, and mobility. To create and implement programming that will be effective in stimulating older adults, museum educators need to practice andragogy and create a safe and supportive environment that will be productive for older adult learning.

Adults have experienced structured schooling and have had many life experiences beyond their childhood classroom. Teachers of older adults focus on these prior experiences to employ new information and knowledge. Not only acquirers of new information, older adults are a resource of knowledge that the teacher can learn from. Educators of older adults base their programs upon the knowledge that adults possess rather than impart information upon them as a teacher would for children.

Children depend upon the teacher as the transmitters of knowledge because they lack the skills and experience to take the responsibility or initiative for their own learning. Adults differ in their learning as they have more life experience. They take responsibility for their own lives and are more motivated to learn new content that may enhance their life satisfaction. As we get older, each individual becomes more knowledgeable and develops their own interests through life experiences whether it be from movies, educational programs, past employment, or travel. Older adults’ experiences shape who they are, what they enjoy, and how they learn and feel about new socio-economic, political or educational occurrences. Each experience molds individuals into the person they become. Educators must account for these emotions and interests when planning or implementing programs.

Three categories of adult learners exist: goal-oriented learners, activities-oriented learners, and learning-oriented learners. Goal-oriented adults will undertake learning if
there is a goal to work toward. If the activity involves a reward such as a certificate or degree these learners will be more motivated to participate. Activities-oriented adults enjoy learning as long as others in the same age group participate. Here, the participant will contribute to a program only if others are willing to do the same. They enjoy social interaction. Learning-oriented adults like to learn for the sake of learning.\textsuperscript{15} This type of learner will find programs that are of interest and become involved with the hope of learning something new. Since most adults can be categorized as goal and activities oriented learners, the need to serve this audience is prevalent. Adults want to learn new material in a world that is changing drastically, but they also need to feel that they are fulfilling a quest for themselves. Through adult interaction, one has a feeling of worth because other adults have gathered to learn as well. Social interaction promotes self-esteem and general wellness among the participants.

Andragogy incorporates the way in which adults learn and how life-long learning is beneficial. The climate in which older adults learn best and what materials teachers use are also important constituents of andragogy. To explore these constituents of andragogy, one can compare these processes to pedagogy. For adults, the learning process is self-directed, unlike their younger counterparts’ need for teacher directed learning. While children possess a dependent personality upon the learning concept or teacher, adults are more self-directed because they have previously been instructed when they were children. In the pedagogical model, the children’s role in the learning experience is to be built upon. By contrast, adults are themselves rich resources for learning. The readiness of adults to learn emerges from life experiences, while children are guided by school curriculum. Since adults have encountered many challenging tasks,

\textsuperscript{15} Knowles, "Andragogy" 29.
adults are oriented to problem-centered learning. Children remain subject-oriented, learning basic skills and methods. Lastly, both children and adults have motivational reasons for learning. Rewards or consequences motivate children, while adults are internally motivated to satisfy their curiosities.\textsuperscript{16}

Although children do possess experiences all can learn from, adults are vast resources of information by means of having lived longer. These andragogical assumptions are the basis upon which teachers of adults extract methods of presentation. Pedagogical teaching practices therefore cannot meet the needs of adult learners. Adult learners “are highly independent and self-directed in their choices of learning opportunities. Further, they teach themselves most of what they learn.”\textsuperscript{17} Because of the knowledge, skills, and experiences older adults possess, educators can build upon their crystallized intelligence, making use of what older adults know. Since older adults connect new ideas to what they have learned, their fluid intelligence allows them to discover new and exciting things.\textsuperscript{18} Adult educators need to utilize the adults’ knowledge to introduce new material and build their intelligence. Unfortunately, there are obstacles that often stagnate the way adults participate in learning. Often, older adults are fearful of participating in educational programs or activities because they may be unfamiliar with the topic or are uncomfortable participating in a program that is discussion oriented.

\textsuperscript{16} Knowles, “Andragogy” 31.


\textsuperscript{18} Knowles, “Andragogy” 32.
Many factors contribute to older adults' fear of learning. Afraid of failure, older adults choose not to participate in learning activities because they do not want to feel inferior or damage their self-respect. Other factors include not wanting to go out at night, lack of fundamental learning skills, and feeling they are too old. If older adults are hampered from learning because of these factors, educators of older adults must find means of transcending these inhibitors. Adults of any age are capable of learning and making meaningful contributions when participating in learning programs. When older adults have decided to partake in learning sessions, other conditions may affect their learning and contributions.

The environment in which the sessions take place can play a role in the ability of older adults to learn. Educators of adults should consider lighting, sound level, length of program, ventilation, and seating. Environmental conditions and the "physical conditions of adults affects their ability to learn." Possessing anxiety and insecurity about succeeding in a new learning situation, older adults may be hindered by their own physical and mental limitations. A "general impression of helplessness is reinforced by the widespread tendency to see disability as an illness." Educators must not perceive disabilities as an illness.

Those with disabilities can contribute and participate actively in programs and have meaningful learning experiences. Although disabilities may hinder older adults’

---


20 Hiemstra 39

movement, hearing, or eyesight, educators can create programs that account for these inhibitors. These programs and learning experiences are meaningful because they stimulate participants creatively, intellectually, and physically. As one becomes older, the need for stimulation is crucial. Older adults generally have a negative attitude toward aging as they feel they are no longer contributing persons to society nor do they have the stamina they once possessed. These programs contribute to the well being of older adults and provide the stimulation that most older adults often need. "It is important to remember that although most older adults are not disabled, approximately twenty percent of the population over the age of sixty-five has some degree of disability." Many of the remaining eighty percent who do not have disabilities will experience sensory changes that affect their ability to enjoy museums. If museum educators and educators in general understand older adults' needs, they can benefit from adaptations to programs or tours. As museums begin to serve this once ignored audience, the museum environment and educational programming have to accommodate their changing needs. As adults get older, it is common for them to experience changes in their health.

"Individuals seventy-five or more years old compose the fastest growing age group in the United States. All of these individuals experience sensory changes, and ... exterior environments can be adapted to accommodate those changes." Such sensory changes in older adults include visual, aural, taste, and olfactory. With the passage of time, pupil size decreases resulting in one third less light reaching the retina causing

---


23 Majewski 79.

24 Majewski 79.
altered visual information. This contributes to an older adult’s inability to fully function visually in a dimly lit environment or to see clearly at night.\textsuperscript{25}

The most frequent impairment of older adults is hearing loss. “Difficulties in hearing can lead to feelings of suspicion, depression, and withdrawal.”\textsuperscript{26} Three types of hearing loss are commonly found in the later years of life: conductive hearing loss, sensory impairment, and sensory neural hearing deficit. The first type results from blockage and can usually be corrected. This type of impairment occurs most frequently because of the build up of wax inside the ear. Persons with this hearing loss hear all sounds less distinctively. Originating in the inner ear, sensory impairment causes those who suffer from it to have difficulties distinguishing high tones. Comprehension of speech becomes difficult. Hearing aids are prescribed for correction. Lastly, the transmission of sound along the auditory nerve between the brain and the inner ear causes sensory neural hearing deficit. These older adults can fully hear, but are unable to comprehend what is being said. To help individuals with sensory neural hearing deficit, one should speak slowly, enunciate, and reduce background noise to enable them to hear and comprehend the conversation.\textsuperscript{27} This is important for museum educators, especially if the program includes a tour of its collections. If there is too much background noise, the participants may not be able to hear or comprehend what the educator is explaining. If engaging in a program held in a classroom environment, the educator needs to speak so the participants can clearly understand the program. This is extremely important to

\textsuperscript{25} Majewski 80.

\textsuperscript{26} Majewski 80.

\textsuperscript{27} Majewski 80.
address because if the participants cannot hear, the program will not be successful or meaningful. The purpose of these programs is to stimulate the mind. To be successful, individuals must be able to follow and understand the content of the program.

The ability to smell decreases over time as individuals experience reductions in chemosensory sensation. Older persons may not be able to detect offensive odors or be aware that they exist. The decline of taste begins to occur after the age of fifty and is a more rapid loss over the age of seventy. One can not experience the taste of food as effectively as when they were younger.28

As the number of older adults continues to expand, “it will become increasingly important for museum personnel to adapt both the programming and the physical surroundings. Older people will benefit greatly from a museum environment which reflects sensitively to their changing senses.”29 If educators of older adults adapt to these needs, participants will enjoy new learning experiences. Although participants may have disabilities, their need to learn persists. Museum educators can provide programs and activities that respond to older adults’ changing needs. First, the educators must understand what those needs are and how they can affect the content and presentation of their program. Using materials that are large enough for participants to see and speaking loudly with clarity assists older adults to comprehend ideas and information. If older adult participants cannot follow the program due to visual or hearing impairments, the educator has not successfully fulfilled the need for intellectual stimulation. To implement programs for older adults, museum educators must be flexible and understand

28 Majewski 81.

29 Majewski 81.
how to accommodate physical and intellectual needs. Once this is understood and employed, older adults will be able to gain satisfaction from the programs being presented.

The teaching-learning process enables adults to learn. Educators become the facilitators, not the transmitters of knowledge. The teaching-learning process incorporates the way adults learn and how the teacher presents the material. Through self-concept, adult learners are self-directed. A mutual spirit of interchange and free involvement by means of discussion fosters self-direction through the use of an informal setting with a circular seating arrangement. Adults' life experience is a potent resource. Planning between the teacher and students can create agreement within groups or committees that work cooperatively. Readiness to learn enriches the student's desire to acquire new knowledge. Methods of self-rating, small group discussion, and the continuous reassessment of needs will enable the educator to address student needs and track their progression. Participating in learning activities willfully conveys the learners' interest in acquiring and applying new information. With an educator who respects, encourages and utilizes the participants' life experiences, the comprehension of new materials is inevitable. Adults use past experience as a means to learn new information.

To achieve understanding of new information, the teacher and students must agree on objectives that are measurable without the teacher being the transmitter of knowledge. Preferring problem-centered materials, adult participants want to use the instructor as a resource and not a guide. For example, the museum educator would present an inquiry or problem. This "problem" is unrelated to mathematics; there may not be one correct answer. This question or problem relates to their discussion and the possibilities of
“solving” the problem may be endless. The museum educator may present the participants with an object or numerous objects. These objects are presented, passed around, and discussed. As adult learners refer to the teacher as a resource, the museum educator may use open-ended questions to help participants find conclusions. The possibilities for these objects are endless as each participant may discover a new or different use for them. Adult learners wish the educator to meet the majority of their needs during program time. Educators of adults must be aware of physical needs as well in order to be successful in mentally stimulating their participants. “The requirements of an environment that will be conducive to adult learning… [suggests that it] should be one in which adults feel at ease.”

Once the environment is conducive for older adults to learn, the educator, having predetermined the learners’ needs, plans the content to be presented and teaches appropriately. The educator must decide the methods, techniques, and devices to be used while instructing adults. Methods are the means people use to conduct educational inquiries. The methods older adults use to learn are determined from experience. The means by which information is conveyed and delivered to the learner are the educator’s techniques. These techniques are selected by how the educator feels the students will learn most effectively. Devices are the instruments that aid the educator’s techniques.

Edgar Dale’s Cone of Experience portrays the “interrelationships of the various types of audio-visual materials as well as their individual ‘positions’ in the learning

---

30 Hiemstra 41.
31 Knowles, The Modern Practice 46.
32 Hiemstra 46.
process.\textsuperscript{33} The Cone of Experience (Table 1) there are two extremes of sensory experience – concrete experience and abstract experience. These sensory experiences are based upon different levels of materials used for the educator’s teaching techniques.

Traveling up the scale abstract experiences prevail, but while traveling down the scale, concrete experiences are prominent.\textsuperscript{35} Both concrete and abstract experiences are significant and valid. One experience will not overpower another be it concrete or abstract. All people learn differently and by means of different techniques and devices. This is conveyed in the Cone of Experience. The Cone of Experience is beneficial for all educators of adults and older adults. Table 1 presents the materials that help adults learn best. Museums have the means and resources to provide abstract and concrete

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{ADULTS AS LEARNERS} & \textbf{THE CONE OF EXPERIENCE}\textsuperscript{34} \\
\hline
\textbf{ABSTRACT} & \\
\hline
Verbal Symbols & Books, pamphlets, reprints, teaching machine programs, programmed texts, \begin{tabular}{c} homemade \textit{materials}\end{tabular} \\
Visual symbols & Flat maps, chalk boards, sketches, cartoons, diagrams, charts \\
Recordings, radio & Photographs, illustrations, filmstrips, slides, recordings \\
still pictures & \\
Motion Pictures & Films, discussion guides \\
Television & Program guides, videotapes, discussion guides \\
Exhibits & Displays, bulletin boards, posters \\
Field Trips & Itineraries, observation guides \\
Demonstrations & Apparatus, raw materials, chalkboard \\
Dramatized experiences & Plays, scripts, puppetry, simulations \\
Contrived experiences & Models, mock-ups, object specimens \\
Direct, purposeful experiences & Worksheets, observation guides, manuals \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{33} Knowles, The Modern Practice 241.

\textsuperscript{34} Knowles, The Modern Practice 242.

\textsuperscript{35} Knowles, The Modern Practice 241.
experiences to various age groups that learn differently. But how differently do people learn?

Everyone learns differently in response to various teaching techniques. Different people use different methods to learn. "Variations in learning styles describe those educational conditions under which adults are most likely to learn and where their comfort level will be high." Learning styles are the methods of learning one has developed over time. People vary in how they respond to new experiences and information. These adaptations of information are the basis by which each of us learns. The 4Mat System has been designed by educator Bernice McCarthy to aid teachers in preparing learning activities for all ages. "The 4Mat System is a cycle of instruction designed to capitalize on the learning styles and brain dominance processing strength of learners. It is a way of organizing teaching that appeals to all learners in turn, while stretching and challenging them."37

By using the 4Mat System, educators can instructionally appeal to all four types of learning styles. As a highly effective teaching tool, the 4Mat System propels learners from "meaning and motivation to conceptual understanding, to problem solving and skills to creative use of the material at hand."38 There are diverse means by which individuals may perceive material. Some connect experience or information to feeling while others take a scientific approach to perceiving information. After the perception of information, how one transforms what they learn is either by doing or watching. One needs to try out

---

36 Guenther 159.


38 McCarthy 215.
what has been learned or reflect upon it. Taking “these two dimensions of perceiving and processing, and [juxtaposing] them to a four quadrant model... [results in a structure that is] the delineation of the boundaries for four major learning styles.”39 These styles of learning are known as types one, two, three, and four. Bernice McCarthy describes in the 4Mat System each of the four types of learners.

**Type One Learners** are idea people. They learn by feeling and watching. They cue in on personal meaning. Their favorite methods are to use the synergy of the group, talking ideas through, brainstorming, and connection their own experiences to the content under study. Their favorite question is WHY? Teachers need to give them reasons, to connect things, to imbue content with meaning.

**Type Two Learners** are analyzers. They learn by thinking and watching. They cue in on concepts and facts. Their favorite methods are lecture, readings. They write to understand and they enjoy research. Their favorite question is WHAT? Teachers need to know their content well and structure it conceptually.

**Type Three Learners** are pragmatists, common sense people. If it is not useful, it is not worth learning. They learn by thinking and doing. They cue in on observations and experiments. Their favorite questions is HOW DOES THIS WORK? Teachers need to let them try things, to see how what they learn fits in the world outside of school.

**Type Four Learners** are self-discoverers. They learn by feeling and doing. They must find things out for themselves. They cue in on possibilities. They enrich what they learn. They love new things and new ways to combine old things. Their favorite question is IF?40

Each slightly different, these various types of learning styles need to be considered when creating and implementing learning activities. For example, if an educator creates a program they should try and address the needs of all four types of learners. If the program is based upon school reform in the United States, the educator should give the

---

39 McCarthy 217.

40 McCarthy 218.
students background information about the subject, thus engaging Type 2 learners. Discussion, questioning, and relating materials to personal experiences will engage Type 1 learners. Using examples and case studies about school reform and how it effects the structure of teaching and learning in schools addresses the needs of Type 3 learners. Having the student create and solve issues and problems regarding school reform will engage Type 4 learners. Although it is important to meet the individual learning needs of the participants by including activities that address all four types of learners, the group as a whole needs to appreciate the diversity of others in the group.

Older adults’ quest for lifelong learning continues. If museum educators, and educators in general, understand the various levels, physical needs, environmental needs, learning needs, psychological needs, and capabilities of older adult learners, the success of programs would be inevitable. Programs created for adults and older adults would benefit greatly from the educator’s comprehension and implementation of andragogical methods. If museums are to serve an audience of older adults that they have neglected in the past, museum educators need to learn and apply andragogy to the creation of museum programs for this older adult audience. By doing so, museums will be able to better serve an audience that continues to grow and search for the enhancement of life-satisfaction.
Educational Needs of Older Adults in Museums: Why and How Museums Should Serve Older Adults

Without education for adults, the enhancement of life satisfaction decreases. The quest for life-long learning is absent as programs and activities for older adults are sparse. "Since the percentage of Americans over sixty-five is increasing every year, it becomes more and more crucial to develop the capabilities of older people to the fullest."\textsuperscript{41} As the number of older adults increases, it is in the best interest of society to foster an older population that can function at high intellectual levels. Life-long learning enables older adults to be stimulated, alert, creative, and make meaningful contributions to society. The demand for older adult programs and activities increases as the percentage of older adults increases. Older adults today have more education and are increasingly directed toward the enhancement of life satisfaction through learning activities. "Because a museum opens its doors to all ages, it is well-placed to encourage life long learning...."\textsuperscript{42}

This chapter explores the positive impact museums can have on older adults through educational programming. Although virtually neglected by museums for years, museum educators have begun to reinvent educational programming to include the older adult audience. The importance of stimulants, such as objects, pictures, and other hands-on materials are discussed.

\textsuperscript{41} Alpaugh, Birrea, and Renner 31.

\textsuperscript{42} Bow, Lalage, "New Needs in Adult and Community Education," \textit{Education in Museums, Museums in Education} (England) 9.
Museums have neglected the education of older adults. Emphasizing the need for educating the young, museum educators overlooked their greatest educational resource—older adults. Having accumulated numerous experiences over the years, older adults are knowledgeable resources for learning. Our culture "in a societal context, is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon a person's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations."\(^{43}\) Educators can create and implement programs based upon andragogical methods that are stimulating and educational while in turn learning from the participants. Such education and information is as priceless as the museum collection that museum educators use in their programs.

Over the years, "more attention has been devoted to effective ways to educate children in museums than to...[educate] adults."\(^{44}\) This neglect of older adult groups has allowed educators to focus on the growth of school-aged groups visiting the museum. Museum educators have been creating and implementing new programs for school-aged children without much concern for older adults. In our society, educating our young is very important. As adults, we are the transmitters of knowledge to our young, not acquirers of knowledge. As time progresses, many changes are occurring in a more complex society than those of generations past. Changes are either forcing or encouraging older adults to keep pace with such societal changes as advances in technology. The need for life-long learning has proved to be important in a world that seems to change more rapidly than before. With a society that is becoming more and

\(^{43}\) Brown 3.

more computer based, programming that includes interactive computer activities can help older adults adapt to these technological advances.

Life-long learning results in positive influences on the physical and mental health of older adults. The more active older adults are, the less they are prone to disintegrate mentally and physically. This is why older adult programming is extremely meaningful. Learning enables the use of body and mind creating more intellectually stimulated adults. Creativity of older adults provides a means to contribute to life satisfaction. "Self-expression and communication with oneself and others are essential for the growth of human beings, regardless of age. Creativity is a life long process which can be stimulated and enhanced at any age."45 With a means of expression, older adults can increase self-satisfaction. Participating in creative activities, older adults respond from their inner-self, enhancing mental self. The stimulation of mental health is the most important factor that is improved through creative activities.

As an individual’s age increases, the ability to learn does not necessarily decrease. Older adults may choose not to participate in learning activities for fear of making mistakes, which in essence damages self-image. "Learning can occur if the older adult is willing, if the information has relevance, and if it is presented properly."46 In an environment where the educator and participants are supportive of one another, the willingness to learn and participate increases. Implementing andragogical methods, meeting the physical needs of the participants, and creating a safe, supportive environment will in turn create an open, interactive program. If older adults facilitate

---

45 Goff 48.

46 Sharpe 263.
learning through previous experiences and involve their intellectual, sensory, and emotional capabilities, “how can museums meet the learning needs of older adults?”

Over the years, museums have realized the important role they can play in lifelong learning. Museums are invaluable educational resources. They are an effective means for people to learn about their own cultural heritage as well as others. Through educational programs, the museum’s audience is given access to its collections and its educational resources. With changing exhibitions and the acquisition of new materials, museums are a haven for lifelong learning. “As museums have tried to meet the needs of ... [a] school age population, they are now aware of the increasing numbers of senior citizens in their communities.” Although older adults and school aged children possess different learning capabilities and styles, museums are suited to provide opportunities to both distinct groups.

Museums offer older adults information, interpretation, and the opportunity for participants to ponder and think about ideas for themselves. Offering challenges, museums confront learners with new information, ideas, and issues. Such challenges encourage older adults use of intellect and prompt participation in learning activities. In a supportive environment in which the participants feel safe, learning and interaction are inevitable. “Adults’ capacity to construct knowledge is enhanced when communication with others facilitates a connection between the self and the wider community of learners.”

---


48 Tepper 19.

Museums can offer leisure activities that enhance life-satisfaction. Through lifelong learning programs, museums can encourage flexible thinking among older adults by providing opportunities for them to think creatively by means of the arts. "Given the tremendous increase in the number of older Americans and their needs for meaningful leisure actives, the arts are becoming exciting and rich resources."\textsuperscript{50} Programs that are created especially for older adults should provide motivational and observational opportunities to learn about and discuss the arts. These opportunities furnish time to reflect upon ideas and meaning as well as allow the expression of feelings. Programs designed to incorporate these opportunities permit older adults to find their own niches. Contributions and participation can then take place in this comfort zone. Museums can fill this need for mental and physical stimulation as the need for older adult programs increases.

Having neglected this audience, museums are beginning to develop programming for older adults. Why are museums beginning to respond to the need of serving their older adult audience? The numbers of older adults in the United States continues to soar as the Baby Boomers from the late 1940's and early 1950's begin to retire and those decades older are living longer due to improved medical care. Museums have realized that older adults are a vast education resource. Their experiences and memories provide museums with information about past times and events, while the museums can use their resources to provoke these memories. As the older adult population grows, museums have begun to provide appropriate programming that is beneficial to all involved. Through serving this once neglected audience, museums may also receive more funding for education programming as well as attract more visitors.

\textsuperscript{50} Barrett and Clements 48.
As time progresses, the number of older adults over 65 will equate or surpass the number of school aged children. As it is society’s responsibility to encourage and teach our young, society also needs to apply such ideas to older adults. The function to learn and contribute does not decrease over time. Studies are revealing that older adults function better mentally when challenged and stimulated.

As discussed in the previous chapter, capabilities of older adults may be hindered. Hearing loss, visual impairments, and decreased mobility may affect how older adults learn, but such disabilities do not mean they can not learn. Museums must consider and be prepared to meet the mental and physical needs of older adults. “It is necessary to know your audience, its limitations and interests before starting to design a long term museum program for senior citizens.”\textsuperscript{51} The major concerns of museum educators encompass the handicaps that limit older adults’ involvement in activities.

The extent of physical and mental impairments widely varies among older adults. The most common are visual and hearing loss followed by quick mental and physical fatigue. Frailty, emotional strain, illness, and other physical restrictions may prevent older adults from visiting the museum. Therefore, the museum must go to them. Museum outreach programs serve an older adult audience unable to attend in-house museum activities. What have museums learned over the past few years about “outreach efforts to older and disabled audiences? We have learned that an enormous need exists in most communities for programs [to be] delivered to audiences that cannot come to places

\textsuperscript{51} Tepper 24.
where programs are provided. Although visiting the museum has been traditionally
recommended, taking the museum to audiences who could otherwise not attend due to
impairments is a great way for museums to serve its audience. The site-specificity of the
museum has been the traditional way of learning about what is housed within its walls.
As the museum exists for all people, not all people are able to visit. Educators of older
adults are beginning to understand the necessity of serving older adult audiences. Such
programming contributes to their life-satisfaction and wellness. Bringing the museum to
older adults is a wonderful means to introduce the museum to those that may have never
been there or are now unable to attend. There are large quantities of older adult
organizations that focus on the enhancement of their members. For example the *Half
Century group* that will be discussed in Chapter 3 was delighted to be contacted for an
onsite program. For the museum to exist for all people, outreach programs are a
wonderful means for the museum to serve its audiences.

Prior to creating elderly programs, museums need to clearly state objectives that
reflect their needs as well as the needs of the older adult audience it intends to serve.
There are three particular recommendations that recognize what older adults need. These
needs also reflect the objectives that museums wish to fulfill. These recommendations
include: 1) supporting learning at all stages of life by way of formal programs; 2)
museum education should be accessible to all audiences regardless of age and the
incapability of going to the museum; and 3) museums should collaborate with different
facilities, institutions, organizations, and agencies. These objectives convey the

---

museum’s educational purpose for serving all audiences, including older adults. To meet these recommendations, museums can provide informal learning activities that foster creative thinking and participation through the arts. Meeting the needs of older adult groups means museums must create meaningful programs that provide opportunities to learn, socially interact, feel safe and comfortable, participate in activities, and challenge new ideas and experiences.

Outreach programs enable museums to serve audiences that may be incapable of visiting the museum. Therefore, the museum visits their facility, accomplishing this through the following process. First, museum educators need to know whom they will be serving. By contacting elderly facilities within the area, museum educators can gather information concerning the needs and interests of older adults. Once educators compile this information, they may begin creating the program. Museum educators need to decide what to present, why it is significant, and how to address the educational needs of the participants and the museum accordingly.

The educator can bring the museum to the older adults’ facility through objects, slide show lectures, and activities. Objects are a wonderful means of involving people. Through open-ended questions – What do you see? What is it made out of? How do you think it works? Who may have used this? What do you think it is? Have you ever used this? What for? – and discussion, participants can become involved sharing experiences, learning about the objects and one another, and learn what the museum has to offer by means of collections and education.

Some of the most effective devices used in programs by museum educators are objects. After all, “the most vital and interesting reason for a museum’s existence is the
potential that objects have for stimulating meaningful human experiences."\textsuperscript{54} Through
the use of objects, educators can help the participants see, understand, interpret, and
respond in rewarding ways including aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional responses.
"To teach is to show someone how to do something, and in museums that something is
having a personally significant experience with an object."\textsuperscript{55} This is the goal that each
museum educator hopes to achieve.

Using objects allows for free interchange of ideas, personal experiences, and the
opportunity to learn something new. Most adult learners apply new information to
previously rendered experiences. Objects permit such associations because it is a
"normal process for people to understand firstly through experiencing material things and
from this to proceed to draw influences, to develop concepts."\textsuperscript{56} When teaching with
objects, participants connect the objects to people, personal events, historical settings,
and function. By projecting associations onto objects, learners better comprehend new
information by applying it to past experiences. Through such associations, museum
educators can relate the program and devices to the present from its original context.
Objects and picture based programs conjure memories from each participant.

"Learning is dependent on memory and most older people feel insecure about

\textsuperscript{54} Williams, Patterson B, "Object Contemplation: Theory into Practice," Patterns in Practice:
Education Roundtable, 1992) 118.

\textsuperscript{55} Williams, "Object Contemplation" 118.

\textsuperscript{56} Hooper-Greenhill, Elisean, "The 'Art of Memory' and Learning in the Museum," The
their ability to remember.” Older adults tend to decline more in short-term memory than in long-term memory. More exposure to material is needed for older adults when they are learning new materials. When given enough time and encouragement, older adults can and will master new material. Long-term memory in older adults is more prevalent because it may have been a happier time for them and these times have been looked upon over and over again throughout the years. Objects are powerful tools because most of our memories are intertwined with them. For example, if the educator showed an older adult group a washboard, participants may have memories about their mother washing the family’s clothing, how they used to wash the clothes on certain days, what soap was used, and how long it took.

Using objects to spark memories involves each participant in the program. The body and mind become stimulated through the presence of objects, discussions about the objects, touching the objects, and the personal experiences and memories recalled through the mere presence of objects. “Hands on artifacts play an important role in presentations…. Seeing or holding objects often act[s] as a catalyst for recollection to share with the group. Touching artifacts is an alternate means of gathering information for people with visual or hearing impairments.” Objects become a wonderful means for participants to use their sense of touch for understanding and exploring new or known materials. Implementing object-based programs enables participants to become involved either through discussion, open-ended questions, visual devices, and the ability to touch and examine each object.

---


58 Tepper 25.
Slide show lectures can include photographs of the museum, the surrounding neighborhood, or the museum’s collections. Once again through open-ended questions and discussions, the program will become highly interactive. With such techniques, the participants are mentally and physically stimulated while making meaningful contributions. The participants learn about the museum and each other while the educator learns about the older adults’ life experiences, how life in that area was decades earlier, and how certain objects shown were used. Reproductions such as pictures and photographs are a wonderful instrument to use with participants to spark memories. But, the use of objects creates a more interactive program and fulfills the needs of older adult participants better. As adults get older, eyesight, mobility, and hearing are affected. Slide shows are great ways to introduce the museum and spark memories, but if objects can be included, it would help those who may not see well. Objects can be touched, smelled, and even tasted. Thus, the museum experience would be even more successful for the participants.

If participants are physically able to visit the museum, the program can include another session at the museum. Educators can give a brief tour of the collections, keeping in mind the limitations of the participants, or provide more objects for discussion. When visiting the museum, participants will feel at ease and comfortable because of the rapport built with the educator during the educator’s program at their facility. By visiting the museum, participants can experience the museum’s cultural history, information, and education that it has to offer.

Another component of such a program could include a post-museum visit. This can occur at the older adults’ facility. Here, hands-on activities related to the lecture and
museum visit could be implemented. Some examples include: creating a timeline of events throughout the participants’ life, a mural of how the community has changed, a scrapbook could be made using pictures or words about one’s life or the community. Other activities can include painting, using clay, creating poems, and many other hands-on projects. With encouragement from the museum educator in a supportive environment, older adults will respond creatively and positively.

“Consideration of the adult learner in a museum begins with — and returns to — the moments of decisions and reflections that attract, deepen, and confirm both the learner and the learning.”

These moments are powerful engagements that will shape the museum experience of older adults. They exercise the self-direction of adult learners with the educator as a guide, not the facilitator of learning. When older adults begin to participate in museum or other leisure activities, they come with their own cognitive style of learning and experiences. Museums can meet the learning and physical needs of this audience, fulfilling the need for life-long learning and are progressively learning to do so.

After years of neglect, museum educators are starting to shift their focus from school-aged children to the fast growing population of older adults. Their unique ability to serve their audiences through the use of objects creates a museum educational system that is intellectual, cultural, aesthetic, stimulating, emotional, and personal. “Unlike any other institution, the museum offers a setting for the connection of the human being to objects through thoughtful, private acts of attention.” These acts of attention encourage free interchange of ideas, thoughts, questions, information, and personal experiences

\[\textit{Carr, David, "The Adult Learner in the Museum," }\textit{Museums and Universities;} 7.\]

\[\textit{Carr 9.}\]
between the participants and educator. Contributing in these activities creates happier and physically and mentally healthier older adults.

Since museums have realized the need for older adult programming, they are beginning to fulfill this need by creating and implementing subject and age appropriate educational activities. Through outreach and in-house programs, museum educators are capable of satisfying the need for life-long learning. As time progresses, the critical demand for older adult programming should decrease as museums satisfy older adults' continuing needs.
Chapter Three

Case Studies:
Museum Programs Created and Implemented for Older Adults

Many older adults suffer from impairments. These impairments most commonly include lack of coordination, hearing and visual loss, and mobile constraints. When creating programs “the museum educator’s role in the early stages of planning is to identify audiences and articulate clear educational objectives in order to develop appropriate communication and interpretive strategies.” Museum educators must consider the physical as well as educational needs of its older adult audiences when creating or implementing programs for this age group. If these needs are not considered or addressed, the educational program will be unsuccessful, causing the participants to become frustrated, angry, or upset. “The method of presentation depends upon the audience’s state of health. Many different types of handicaps must be considered during preparation of the material. Impaired vision, loss of hearing and slowed comprehension of information are barriers to enjoyment.” This chapter conveys how museums and its educators can fulfill older adults’ needs through understanding and implementing programs that accommodate their changing physical and educational abilities. Three case studies are presented. These programs outline what works and does not work when implementing programs for older adults.

61 Williams, “American Association” 63.
62 Tepper 25.
Physical and mental needs of older adults are extremely important to meet when preparing and implementing educational programs. Museum educators must address these needs while creating the program because there are many difficulties that can occur during the program. Some participants may be tired due to lack of sleep or some may not be as sturdy on their feet as normal. Addressing all of these needs will help produce a program that is enjoyable for the older adult participants. The more enjoyable the program is, the more involved the group will be. Museum education programs are provided to stimulate participants so that they may remain mentally and physically active.

In the educational endeavor of serving older audiences, only few museums have successfully fulfilled this need. Programs included outreach programs at older adult facilities and in-house programs at the museums. Many of those who participate in museum programs are mentally and physically stimulated through their senses of touch, sight, and hearing. For these programs to successfully stimulate and educate older participants, certain techniques of presentation should be followed.

The successes of these programs draw upon the practice of andragogy. By using these processes, museum educators can draw upon participants' knowledge while addressing their education needs. Programs that are worthwhile follow these instruments.

For an outreach program, educators should arrive at the site at least twenty minutes early. This will allow the educator time to set up equipment and materials as well as meet and greet participants. Also, the educator should leave time after the program to speak with participants and answer questions.63

Whether the program is at the museum or at the older adult facility, room set-up is

---

63 Sharpe 265.
critical particularly if participants have limited mobility. For discussion and object-oriented programs, a semi-circular seating arrangement is best. This fosters interaction between the educator and students and between the students themselves.\(^{64}\)

Educators should be aware of the way they address older adults. Many will speak down to the elderly or treat them as small children. The elderly should be spoken to in a manner used for speaking to any other adult group. When speaking to a group of older adults, speak loudly and project your words clearly, but do not shout. Use a microphone if one is available to amplify the presenter’s voice. Also, avoid speaking to the group when facing away from them, as words may become muffled and difficult to understand.\(^{65}\)

The educator needs to make the presentation appropriate for all age levels. Present simple and complex information using language that is non-technical. By doing so, educators can reach the participants’ various levels and styles of learning. Educators should keep the program simple without introducing too many stimuli at once because participants may become confused. Keeping the program direct will help participants fully comprehend the program. When using printed materials, make sure that the letters are clear and written in large print. This will allow participants to see and read materials easier. When asking questions and engaging in discussion allow time for reaction. This gives participants time to think before they respond. By hurrying participants to answer, they may become upset or frustrated and refuse to participate in the remainder of the

\(^{64}\) Sharpe 265.

\(^{65}\) Sharpe 265.
program.\textsuperscript{66}

If it is difficult for an educator to understand a participant’s answer or comment, ask them to repeat it. If the comment is still indecipherable, repeat what you believe the gist of the comment to be by phrasing it as a question. This will allow the participant to answer yes or no. By no means should an educator ever ignore a participant’s contribution to the program.\textsuperscript{67}

Using objects in programs is extremely vital for learning. But, educators need to be aware that by just holding the objects up may not enable participants to see them clearly. The object should be carried around when discussing it and then passed around allowing each person to experience the object individually. The educator may have to assist in passing around objects.\textsuperscript{68}

Many aspects of learning need to be considered. Physical impairments contribute greatly to the comprehension and enjoyment of educational programs. Through implementing andragogical methods and creating an environment that is flexible and meets participants’ physical needs, museum educators can foster meaningful programming.

If educators follow these presentation techniques, older adults and museum educators will be able to learn and participate in activities successfully together. Museum educators and educators in general need to understand the different ways and needs of adult learning. By applying andragogical principles to the presentation techniques

\textsuperscript{66} Sharpe 265.

\textsuperscript{67} Sharpe 265.

\textsuperscript{68} Sharpe 265
discussed, older adult participants will successfully enjoy, learn, and be mentally and physically stimulated. This should be the main goal to which educators of older adults strive.

Programs based upon objects are essentially linked to memories. Individuals often attach various meanings to objects due to their own experiences with them. "The way a person feels during an experience becomes an integral part of his or her memory of that experience."69 If this experience includes objects, then these objects will become an integral part of that memory and experience. Memories play an active role in the learning process as past experiences are related to new ones. They are usually consolidated with others and may become lost. However, those memories with strong emotional associations are easily conjured.

In learning, personal feelings, beliefs, and attitudes shape the way information is processed and acquired. In Bloom's Taxonomy, the affective, the cognitive, and the psychomotor refer to the personal context in which each individual learns. The affective encompasses feelings, values, emotions, and attitude. Positive or negative experiences shape the way in which one feels and values certain aspects of experiences. Attitudes toward that experience and future encounters will be affected by the initial experience. The cognitive relates to remembering or memories. Information begins to combine and synthesize into memories. Many experiences begin to intertwine and build upon one another allowing stronger and more easily remembered experiences. The psychomotor is related to muscular skills that manipulate and coordinate information.70 After the


70 Dierking 103.
information is received and manipulated through past experiences and emotions, it is stored in memory. To be successful, any good program will build upon the participants’ past experience whether they are positive or negative. Through previous experiences, participants can learn and comprehend new information. Reminiscing is extremely important, enabling older adults to connect memories to new information.

"Experience is even more important to older adults because the recollection of past experiences – reminiscing – is an integral part of the aging process."\textsuperscript{71} Older adults benefit from reminiscing. Through remembering one’s life, pride and self-esteem are enhanced. Older adults who are not active in the present enjoy remembering their past achievements. Reviewing one’s life restores a sense of belonging, heritage, and pride in their societal contributions of the past. Because reminiscing is an active process, older adults who participate in reminiscing activities are mentally stimulated and positively engaged in self-enhancement.

Museums have the means and resources to foster the self-enhancement of older adults through educational programming. Because the museum is collection based, there are a vast variety of objects from different periods and places in time that can be used to enhance older adults’ life satisfaction by means of leisurely and educational activities. Following andragogical methods, fulfilling physical and mental needs, creating a safe, comfortable environment, and incorporating memories and past experiences into the program will provide for the participants and museum a wonderfully successful interactive learning program.

\textit{Memories and Things} was a program conducted by the Workers’ Educational

\textsuperscript{71} Sharpe 264.
Association in Scotland from 1986 to 1988. The project focused on everyday life on the historic Royal Mile in Edinburgh, Scotland. One of the project’s main priorities was to “meet older people’s needs and desires for mentally stimulating activities.”72 Reminiscing is of extreme value for mental stimulation allowing participants to recognize their skills and knowledge while rediscovering a sense of worth about their past. This includes various types of reminisces. Not all memories will be positive. By participating in these programs, older adults can build upon and learn from all memories regardless if they were good or bad. In order to spark memories, the educators realized the need for stimulus materials. Such materials included pictures, books, photographs, objects, press cuttings, and music. The most evocative responses emerged when objects from the recent past were presented to the older adult group. Most participants had experiences with such objects as gas masks and real silk stockings.73 By providing these stimulants, participants were able to recall personal and emotional experiences with these objects resulting in an interaction of reminiscence and mental stimulation.

Many of these materials and objects used in the Memories and Things program came from Edinburgh City Museums including the Huntly House and the Museum of Childhood. Although these borrowed objects were an extremely important tool for discussion and reminiscence, the older adult participants’ “memories of aspects of everyday life such as street games, clay-pipe smoking, domestic service, and working in the rubber mill are all invaluable sources of information.”74

---


73 Workers’ Educational Association 1.

74 Workers’ Educational Association 1.
The *Memories and Things* program was created for the set up of a new museum in Edinburgh to be called The People’s Story. This new museum would be dedicated to the life and work of everyday people in Edinburgh from the late eighteenth-century to the present day.\(^7\) Thus, *Memories and Things* was a result of the need to gather information about past times. This also explains why this successful program for older adults only lasted for two years. Once the information was gathered from the older adult participants for the new museum, funding for the *Memories and Things* program was withdrawn. Through the *Memories and Things* program, stories about what times were like decades ago were recorded providing insight into objects, family life, work, and other aspects of everyday life in Edinburgh.

The *Memories and Things* program was established for the set up of The People’s Story Museum based upon the fulfillment of five objectives. First, the educators wanted to welcome groups of older adults into the museum for interactive programs and visits. Second, they wanted to develop collections of handling objects that could be loaned to different older adult groups and facilities. Third, they wanted to have two reminiscent groups in the community that would participate and experience museum programs and offerings. These participants would then evaluate the services rendered. Fourth, they formed a People’s Story Group of older adults that would provide information for the new People’s Story Museum. Last, two exhibitions were to be produced based upon the older adult participants’ work and stories. This was to present to others how museums and libraries can offer wonderful learning opportunities to everyone including older adults.

\(^7\) Workers’ Educational Association 1
adults.\textsuperscript{76}

With these five objectives and the purpose of gathering information for The People’s Story Museum, the \textit{Memories and Things} program was launched. The older adult groups were brought to the Huntly House Museum to participate in object based programs. Participants were then encouraged to share their stories and knowledge of artifacts as well as acquire information from the museum educator and other participants. Most groups arrived by bus and were accompanied by staff from their facility.\textsuperscript{77}

Meeting in the Huntly House Museum’s lecture room, located on the third floor, the participants had to walk up three flights of stairs due to the lack of an elevator. Some older adults were not able to participate in the program due to physical impairments that prevented them from climbing three flights of stairs.\textsuperscript{78} Once they arrived at the lecture room, plastic chairs were arranged around a long rectangular table. This is not an ideal situation for older adults to learn. Having discussed earlier the best environment for adults to learn and the physical disabilities that may impair many older adults, other arrangements should have been considered. A ground floor room or the availability of an elevator would be ideal, making for a less stressful program beginning. The use of softer chairs would be more comfortable for the participants rather than plastic. Also, for a more interactive program without many side conversations, a round table or circular seating arrangement would be more appropriate. This allows for all participants to interact with the educator and one another and share with the whole group memories and

\textsuperscript{76} Workers’ Educational Association 2.

\textsuperscript{77} Workers’ Educational Association 3.

\textsuperscript{78} Workers’ Educational Association 3.
experiences. With the ability for each participant to see the entire group, side conversations and the splitting into small groups would be less likely to occur. This will enable the program to run more smoothly.

When the group was seated and settled, the educators introduced themselves and outlined the activities to take place. Because they were recording the program, the museum educators reminded the group before each session that they would be audio-taped. No one objected to this recording, but if that happened, the educators would refrain from recording the session for protecting the participants’ privacy. The program consisted mainly of handling objects, open-ended questions, and discussion. The educators introduced one object at a time, passing it from person to person. Open-ended questions accompanied each object to generate discussion. Such questions included: “How would you use this?” “When or where would you wear this article of clothing?” “Why did people stop using these utensils?”

These questions prompted participants to engage in discussions about their childhood and young adulthood. Many shared memories and first hand experiences. All of these responses were recorded and later transcribed to be used for their exhibitions and for The People’s Story Museum. Through the Memories and Things programming, older adults were respected, encouraged to participate, and treated as teachers as well as learners. The interactive object based programs stimulated the older adult participants mentally and physically. By creating a safe, comfortable learning environment, the museum program positively enhanced participants’ life satisfaction.

79 Workers’ Educational Association 4.

80 Workers’ Educational Association 5.
These museum visits were successful in two main ways. Firstly, "they were enjoyed by the majority of the participants. Sharing memories and experiences and hearing them valued by other people was an enriching experience for many. Secondly, the museum used extracts from the transcripts" in its upcoming exhibition. As a result of these successful programs, handling object collections were developed. These theme centered boxes consisted of objects, information, and questions about the objects. If a facility wanted to use one of these boxes, they could call the museum and make arrangements to pick up the box and after an allotted amount of time, return the box to the museum.

Although Memories and Things was an extremely successful program, some improvements for future endeavors of creating older adult museum programs need to be stressed again. The museum educators need to consider older adults' physical needs as an integral part of their learning process. Thus, climbing stairs and walking or standing for long periods of time should be avoided. A semicircular seating arrangement will create more group interaction without participants breaking into groups. Free exchanges with each other and the educator are more likely to occur in this informal seating arrangement. An initial introduction to the museum and the program should be conducted at the older adults' facility to create a bond and sense of safety with the educator and a familiarity with the museum and its offerings. With these recommendations, the Memories and Things programs would have been even more successful, enjoyable, and stimulating for the museum educators and especially for the older adult participants.

---

81 Workers' Educational Association 5.
Another wonderful program for educators to draw upon is *The Quality of Life.* This program, as well as the *Memories and Things* program, provides useful information about how to create and implement programming for older adults. Museum educators can learn from the successes and problems that evolved from the implementation of these programs.

Just as plants need soil, sun, and rain "to attain maximum growth, human beings need to engage in self-expression, to gain an understanding and acceptance of self and to become aware of the part we play in directing our own growth and development."  

*The Quality of Life* program conducted by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities in conjunction with the University of Georgia was funded from 1988 to 1991. *The Quality of Life* program was a study that used specially developed programs for older adults to enhance their creativity, physical being, and life satisfaction through physical, mental, and expressive activities.  

This program was created and based upon three stages of creative process as well as the following tenets: people can learn at all ages, activities should be creative and expressive, and materials should be age and subject appropriate. The three stages of creative process includes before, during, and beyond program activities that would advance participants through individual creative processes from curiosity to experimentation to the incorporation of activities into daily life. These underlying stages and tenets aided the educators to produce a multifaceted program that included in-house

---

62 Goff 40.

63 Barret and Clements 48.
and outreach components. Program constituents included a pre-museum lesson, a museum visit, and a post-museum lesson.\textsuperscript{84}

Building the foundation for the museum visit, the pre-museum lesson informed the older adult participants about what they would be seeing and doing while at the museum. Also, a slide show presentation was conducted at the elderly facility that presented the history of and highlights from the exhibition they would be viewing while at the museum. Considering the participants’ disabilities, the educators included hands-on materials to accompany the slide show lecture.\textsuperscript{85} Hands-on objects provide concrete matter for participants to touch, smell, and view. Such materials allow participants to learn and connect personal experiences more easily to the subject matter of the educational program.

Approximately one week after the pre-museum lesson, the older adults visited the museum. Magnifying glasses were provided for the participants because some of the drawings in the exhibition were small. Folding stools were also provided for older adults who may not be able to stand for long periods of time. Throughout the museum tour, participants viewed works of art that had previously been selected by the educators. Each participant was encouraged to discuss the art work through open-ended questions and guidance by the educators. Once the tour and discussion had ended, refreshments were served and extra time was allotted for the older adults to roam throughout the museum’s galleries.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Barret and Clements 48-49

\textsuperscript{85} Barret and Clements 50.

\textsuperscript{86} Barret and Clements 51.
The final component, the post-museum visit, consisted of a studio art activity held at the elderly facility. Clay was chosen for the studio activity because “most older adults have few preconceived notions about their ability to work with clay.” Due to low self-esteem, many people, especially older adults, commonly fear making art or crafts. With the encouragement and support of the educator, participants will eventually become relaxed and gain confidence in their ability to create. “During the process of creating [clay] angels, older adults talked with one another, laughed at their own efforts, and often complimented each other’s work.” This studio activity was a wonderful accompaniment to the pre-museum lesson and the museum visit. Participants were extremely delighted with the program due to the respect, encouragement, and self-enhancement they received by participating in this educational museum program.

This program was extremely successful and enjoyed by all older adult participants. This program shows that older adults “can benefit from arts/fitness programming and can increase their creative abilities. The Quality of Life program... offers a rich variety of creative opportunities for older adults.” Older adult participants are able to draw upon their previous life experiences to aid them in incorporating and understanding new materials through creative activities. The Quality of Life program was extremely successful and can be used as a model for museum educators who plan to create older adult specific programs. The educators who implemented The Quality of Life program considered their audiences’ physical as well as intellectual capabilities and

---

87 Barret and Clements 51.

88 Barret and Clements 51.

89 Barret and Clements 51.
chose subject matter and materials that were pertinent to the age specific group.

It is quite unfortunate that these types of programs are only funded for research purposes. They have proven to be successful in stimulating both the body and mind of older adults and yet, these programs are funded only for short periods of time. In contrast, children’s programming continues to receive sponsors and funds. Why does older adult programming only receive funds when being implemented for research about older adults? Programming should exist equally for school children, adults, and older adults. Museums are starting to respond to this lack of programming and are beginning to serve audiences they once ignored.

The *Memories and Things* and *The Quality of Life* programs are wonderful resources for educators to draw from when creating programs for older adults. Without this first step, continuous older adult programming would not begin to exist. Although many museums may not implement older adult programs, many other museums have begun the process or have started to create and implement older adult programming. Providing vast resources of information museums have proven to be extremely important instruments for life-long learning.

Having conducted much research concerning the education and physical and mental needs of older adults, I decided that it would be in my best interest to practice these processes before writing about them. While creating the program *Stroll Down Memory Lane*, many factors had to be taken into consideration. For whom the program was for, what physical and mental needs had to be addressed, what materials would be pertinent for discussion, and where the program would be held had to be formulated.
On Wednesday, January 13, 1999, I implemented an older adult program based upon the adult teaching practices discussed in Chapter One and upon the information provided by the two case studies previously discussed. Presented to a group called Half-Century, the *A Stroll Down Memory Lane* program was a slide lecture based on old photographs. The Half-Century is a church group originating from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Norwood, Pennsylvania. This group meets monthly and participates in a variety of activities. The slide lecture focused on old photographs of Norwood and two neighboring towns, Glenolden and Prospect Park, Pennsylvania. Such slides included high schools, movie theaters, grade schools, churches, train stations, and other well-known and easily recognizable locations.

The program was held at Immanuel Lutheran Church at noon. Participants were responsible for arriving at the church themselves. Most were physically able, but if they were not, other members of the group arranged to help others to get to the program. First there was a luncheon before the slide show. During the meal, many spoke of being extremely excited about the reminiscent slide presentation, *A Stroll Down Memory Lane*. After lunch, the tables cleared and I escorted the group to the next room where the seating arrangement consisted of rows and a slide screen and projector set-up. To begin the program, trigger questions prompted interactive participation and discussion. Such questions included, “What was one of the things you remember most about either Norwood, Prospect Park, or Glenolden?” “What did you do for fun when you were in high school?” “What were some big events that happened in this area?” and “How do you think these areas have changed over the years?” Many of the participants wanted to speak, so it became a bit hectic as they began to blurt out experiences and memories. I
had to remind the group that each response was extremely important and that in order to hear all of them only one person at a time could be heard. This helped quite a bit, but there was always someone who wanted to speak out above the others.

Questions that accompanied the slides included: “Does anyone recognize this building, park, or location?” Everyone recognized each slide shown as they grew up and still live in these areas. Many had stories and memories to share, thus we spent much time discussing each slide. I also included my perspective and experiences, as they were quite different from those of the group. After the slide show ended, the question “How have things changed?” prompted more discussion. “Do you think these changes are for the better or do you think they have made things worse?” Many had opinions about society today and those children who now live there. It was really a wonderful interchange of generations as the age span of the group ranged from the early sixties to the late eighties. All involved learned quite a lot about the area and how each individual experienced their childhood and adulthood in these small towns.

After the program was completed, many of the Half-Century members were extremely satisfied and excited about this program. They continued to talk about it among themselves after the slide show was finished. The following week at church, many mentioned the program and were still conversing about their memories with one another and with others. Assessing the program, I believe it was successful, but would have done a few things differently. I would propose that the seating arrangement should be in a semi-circular or circular form rather than be set up into rows. This arrangement in rows allowed for side conversations to take place during the program. A half-circular seating arrangement facing the slide screen would have been ideal. This would have cut
back on side conversations and the pairing off of participants. Also, a microphone would have been useful when speaking to the participants. But this was not available for use, so I spoke loudly and clearly to make sure that the participants were able to follow the program and hear the questions. Other than these few suggestions, the program was a success. If the program were to be a multi-visit program, a wonderful hands-on project would be to create a scrapbook using words, photographs, drawings, fabrics, and other types of material. Such themes could include how the neighborhoods have changed, what kinds of activities people did for fun, or any type of experience the individual wished to include. Although this was not an option, I hope to implement another reminiscent program that would be multi-visit, so that a hands on component could be included. Creative activities do enhance and increase life satisfaction through the stimulation of each individual’s body and mind.

These three case studies are good examples of how programs for older adults can be successful when practicing the principles of andragogy, considering the physical needs of the participants, and implementing good presentation skills. Although these case studies were only funded or supported for short periods of time, they are quite useful to educators, particularly if they are beginning to create and implement older adult programs. Museums have vast resources to serve this audience through the use of objects and other materials. When presented properly, the use of objects, photographs, and other materials become instruments that prompt discussion, memories, and past experiences to intellectually stimulate each participant.

Successful programs for older adults need to encompass three main components: andragogy, physical needs, and presentation techniques. Each of these constituents are
closely linked as one needs the others to be successful. If museum educators as well as educators in general want to fill the need for life-long learning, they will link these three processes through the understanding of how older adults learn. Just as children learn through pedagogical principles, adults and older adults learn as well, but through different processes. Regardless of age, comprehension level, physical setbacks, or mental capacity, everyone can learn when presented materials through good teaching practices.

The best way for educators who are interested in creating older adult programs to begin is to find case studies and research that has been established on the learning processes of older adults. Once museum educators have studied andragogy and how best to present materials to older adults, the physical needs of older adults must be considered. As adults become older, physical capacities begin to decrease. Museum educators need to recognize and address these issues so that participants can have meaningful, educational museum experiences. The next step would be to find information and case studies on older adult museum programming. Here educators can learn from previous mistakes and incorporate successful components.
Education stimulates creativity in older adults. It provides an essential constituent of keeping older adults contributing members of society. Educational programs involving older adults “in creative thinking, new interests, and novel projects would lead to leisure time accomplishments that would enhance their self-concept and increase life satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{90} As demographics shift and the percentage of older adults increases, life-long learning must be met. Today, older adults “are healthier, more active, make greater use of their leisure time, engage in more leisure activities than ever before, and have a greater amount of disposable income than before.”\textsuperscript{91} The need for life-long learning has become a very important part of continuing education. As more adults retire earlier, live longer, and become the largest segment of the population, continuing education for older adults enables them to stay alert and remain contributors to society. Museums are the richest source of original objects and works of art that portray the history of cultures.\textsuperscript{92} Museum programming centers around these objects because they are “important and evocative survivals of human civilization worthy of careful study and with powerful educational impact.”\textsuperscript{93} This thesis provides the information and instruments for museum

\textsuperscript{90} Alpaugh, Birren, and Renner 18.

\textsuperscript{91} Cruce and Thompson 35.

\textsuperscript{92} Anderson, David, “Museums Must Recognize the Needs of All Users,” \textit{Adults Learning} March 1997: 178.

\textsuperscript{93} Alexander, Edward P, \textit{Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums} (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1993) 119.
educators and all educators of older adults to create and implement programming that incorporates the physical and educational needs of this audience. The steps and processes of how to create successful programs for older adults is conveyed throughout the various chapters. Most significantly, the importance of why museums should serve older adults is presented. One of the must successful ways to teach all museum audiences is through the use of objects.

Objects are an extremely important teaching tool. These programs satisfy many different needs of older adults. The senses of sight, touch, and smell are all stimulated through hands-on programs and activities. The use of objects prompts a creative process through participants projecting their experiences, emotions, and memories upon them. Objects allow for memories to be conjured and interactive discussions to flourish. Museums are primary resources of history embedded in objects. Their role in life-long learning can no longer be ignored or neglected. Museums have begun to realize and play an important role in life-long learning.

Having neglected older adult audiences to primarily serve school aged children, museums are now answering to the need for older adult programming. As the number of older adults increases, museums must meet the demands of serving an audience it previously ignored. The population of retirees and older adults continues to grow as Baby Boomers are becoming older. To serve this audience, museum educators need to learn and understand andragogy, presentation techniques, and the physical needs and impairments of older adults. For programs to be successful and meet the needs of older adults, museum educators need to clearly understand their learning processes. “First it is important for museums to establish the learning needs of these groups and understand the
ways that different people learn, depending on their age, past learning experiences and preference for formal or informal learning.  

An informal learning environment is typically most effective when teaching adults. Adults are self-directed learners. They use their past experiences to gain and understand new information. Adults are problem-oriented and use past problems to solve and learn new materials. Adults engage in educational activities not only as students, but as teachers as well. Adults and especially older adults are a vast resource of information. Their contribution to learning environments is extremely fruitful for all involved.

Older adults approach educational activities drawing upon a variety of experiences. In this situation an informal learning setting allows for participants to comfortably participate in programs and to make them feel respected and adequate. The more informal and comfortable the environment is, the safer the older adult participants feel which in turn creates a more interactive and participatory program. The way a room is prepared is important for productive learning, but more significant is the way educators present materials and interact with the participants.

Older adults may need more encouragement than school aged children because many older adults possess a low self-image. The more supportive the educator, the more involved participants become. At the same time, the adequate presentation of the material is crucial to a successful program. The program must accommodate the physical needs of older adults. In particular, the program should address visual, aural, and mobility constraints. Educators must remember to speak loudly, to project words clearly and to keep participants from standing or walking for long periods of time. The use of a microphone would be beneficial as well as projecting images onto a large screen so

---

94 Reynolds 182.
participants may view them. Using portable chairs when taking a museum tour or having comfortable chairs in a lecture or class room will contribute to participants' comfort, resulting in a relaxed, safe environment.

Even though educators may follow all of the principles of adult education, participant reactions will differ. Many things affect the way we feel or respond to various situations. Educators need to be prepared for the fact that some participants may become agitated or upset by something that is not associated with the program or educator. An interactive situation, such as discussing objects or sharing memories, will be hampered when participants speak over one another. Although a circular seating arrangement will lessen this occurrence, people will continue to speak over one another.

Depending on the length of the program, many participants will begin to fall asleep for short periods of time. This may be unrelated to the program or educator, but to the participants' lack of sleep or sleeping patterns. Educators should try to schedule programs in the morning when participants are more alert and awake. As the day continues, older adults may tire and have less of an attention span toward the evening.

Many other factors can affect the way a person will react or behave during educational activities. Educators need to be aware that older adult participants may react in various ways, but the program must continue. Using andragogy, the principles of adult education, combined with appropriate presentation skills, appropriate materials, and the understanding of physical impairments, educators of older adults in museums or otherwise can create wonderfully successful programs that contribute to the need for lifelong learning. As adults become older and the number of this age group increases, museums can provide learning activities that stimulate their mind and body.
“People who are sixty-five years old and older are part of the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population.... In 1983 there were 27.4 million people over the age of sixty-five.... The older population will reach sixty-five million by the year 2030."\textsuperscript{95} As the population of older adults expands, it will be increasingly important for museums and their educators to adapt programming and the physical museum surroundings to meet the needs of older adults. Older adults will benefit enormously from a museum environment that is sensitive to their changing needs. As this age group continues to grow at high rates, it is in the museum's best interest to help develop the capacities of older adults to the fullest. It becomes important for all to employ life-long learning so that older adults may continue to be active members of society. Without such learning, "society loses the benefit of having an older population that is functioning at a high level of intelligence."\textsuperscript{96}

Museums are a valuable educational resource. They preserve the history of many cultural heritages through their collections and present them through exhibitions and educational programming. As people become older they "continue to seek information and knowledge throughout their lives and museums play an important role in lifelong learning."\textsuperscript{97} Museums have begun to fulfill the need for life satisfaction among adults by providing educational and enjoyable programs. Hopefully, museums will continue this endeavor as the number of older adults continues to increase. By using their vast resources, museums can serve the older adult audiences as well as they have been able to serve school aged children. By providing educational programming museums can fulfill

\textsuperscript{95} Majewski 79.

\textsuperscript{96} Alpaugh, Birren, Renner 31.

\textsuperscript{97} Carlton 176.
older adults’ continuing need for stimulation, both mental and physical and by doing so provide for their survival.

This survival through programs enhances older adults’ life-satisfaction while stimulating their mind and body. If my Grandfather’s older adult community offered more programming, he may have enjoyed participating in programs rather than sleeping in a chair all day. The more active older adults are whether physically or mentally active or both, they remain healthier than those, like my Grandfather, who do not participate in stimulating activities. Museums can offer the stimulating programs that older adults need. As this age population grows and as institutions continue to be transformed, museums are beginning to provide wonderful activities that enhance the life of older adults and nourish their quest for life-long learning.
Bibliography


