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NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM USER RESEARCH BRIEF | Teachers

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METHODOLOGY

User Group

The user group for this report was teachers, specifically those that teach K-12. The New York Transit Museum (NYTM) has a great amount of information for teachers/educational purposes, hence why our team found “teachers” to be an important user group to examine. The goal was to see how education professionals interacted with the website of a cultural institution as well as their opinions about museums from the point of view as a patron as well as a teacher.

Methods

The two methods used to collect data reports were interviews and observations. These methods were chosen to get a more intimate perspective from research participants. A total of four teachers participated in the study: two for interviews, two for observations. Both techniques were done in order accommodate all schedules and at participants' convenience.

Interviews: Structured, email-correspondence based interviews were conducted to collect data. Sixteen questions were divided into three sections: Demographic, Museums – general, Museums – special interest, teachers. Please see Appendix A for the complete list of questions and answers.

Observations: Participants were asked to complete diaries that recorded their interactions with a chosen website that was found to be a significant foil to the NYTM. These indirect observations provided participants with a set of tasks and questions they should aim to answer as they complete them. Please see Appendix B for the participant's diary entries.

RESULTS

After conducting the selected methods to collect data about the identified user group, the following insights were learned:

- **Education professionals are more likely to bring their students to a cultural institution (museum) if there is a specific tour that caters to the age/learning level of their students.**

Both teachers responded quite positively when asked in their interviews if whether or not an institution had tours that catered to the age of students would affect the decision to visit it. This interest seems to imply that teachers want to know that the museum will know how to handle the educational needs of their students as well as know how to keep them engaged for an extend period of time.

- **If teachers do not have positive interactions with website's learning tools, they will not be seen as appropriate for students.**

Both observation participants had difficulty playing a game on the observation site which seemed to give an overall negative perception of it. If education tools are too challenging for teachers – no matter what the obstacle may be – they will not find them fit for students. If a website is going to present something like an educational game it is important that it is well user tested and gives added value to the site as well as the institution's content.

- **Users use language intuitive and natural to them to find information.**

Both observation participants had difficulty finding rates for K-12 students to visit the museum. This issue stemmed from where they believed the rates should be based on the website's navigation labels and their knowledge of what those labels could mean. To fix this issue, it would be beneficial to have this information in more than one possible location as our users did not intuitively seek the “correct” location at first try.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interviews

Two structured, email-correspondence based interviews were conducted to collect data about our users. Interviewees were identified as teachers prior to being asked to be part of the study.

Interview questions were presented in three sections: Demographic, Museums – general, Museums – special interest, teachers. Able to complete the sixteen question process at their upmost convenience, Interview 1 took four hours to be confirmed as “complete” while Interview 2 took five days to be confirmed as “complete”.

Interview questions emailed to participants:

Demographic:

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Education level
4. Computer skills

About Museums:

5. How often do you visit museums?
6. Do you or have you ever had a museum membership?
7. Do you follow any museums on social media?
8. When looking for information about a museum, where do you look first?
9. What is the primary information you would like to see on the home page of a museum you would like to visit?
10. If this information was not on the home page how long (i.e. how many clicks, how many minutes) would you consider optimal for finding what you need?
11. What would most motivate you to visit a museum, particularly one you have not visited before?

Teaching and Museums:

12. Of what value are cultural institutions to your teaching goals?
13. Do you ever go on field trips to cultural institutions, specifically museums?
14. If you were interested in bringing your students to a museum how long would you ideally spend on their website to find the appropriate information?
15. Would whether or not an institution have tours that cater to the age of your students effect your decision to visit it?
16. Would you consider an institution website a valuable source for information materials? Lesson plans, videos, etc.?

INTERVIEW 1

Demographic

1. **Age:** 24
2. **Gender:** Female
3. **Education level:** College
4. **Computer skills:** Moderate

About Museums

5. **How often do you visit museums?** I visit museums about once every few years. I tend to go to a museum when I travel on my summer breaks to a new place.
6. **Do you or have you ever had a museum membership?** I have never had a museum membership.
7. **Do you follow any museums on social media?** I do not follow any museum on social media.
8. **When looking for information about a museum, where do you look first?** If I want to know more information about a museum I go to the website of that particular museum. I feel by doing this, I would get more information about what that museum would have to offer. If I wanted to find out more information about what others thought about that museum, I would google museum reviews for that particular museum.
9. **What is the primary information you would like to see on the home page of a museum you would like to visit?** I would like to see what kind of kid friendly activities that they offered for a school field trip. I would want to see it on the home page, because that would probably mean that the museum would be well equipped and ready to handle having a field trip at that location. My hope would be that the location would be really good at keeping students entertained as well as engaged during the field trip.
10. **If this information was not on the home page how long (i.e. how many clicks, how many minutes) would you consider optimal for finding what you need?** I would probably search each of the different tabs on the website. However, I probably wouldn't do a whole lot of clicking on the different tabbed webpages that I have clicked on. If I clicked from the homepage to a tabbed link that led me to a different page, I would not click more than once on that separate page to find what I was looking for. I would go back to the homepage to click on a different tabbed link to discover another separate page. I tend to look for easy access on kid friendly activities, because (in my opinion) nothing kid friendly should be hard to find on the website. Especially since I want a location for my students to have a fun and enjoyable experience. I tend to link these two in my mind when searching for field trip locations.
11. **What would most motivate you to visit a museum, particularly one you have not visited before?** Enjoyable experiences that are engaging as well as educational. I feel that all of these are usually tied up into the essence of the museum itself.

Teaching and Museums

12. **Of what value are cultural institutions to your teaching goals?** This is actually quite high on the teaching goal list. The demographic of students that my school serves receives very little (if any) cultural institution experience. My students do not have the means to visit these locations without the assistance of my school. I know that if I do not provide opportunities for my students to go to experiences to these locations, they may never get that opportunity.

13. **Do you ever go on field trips to cultural institutions, specifically museums?** Yes, in fact we did go on a field trip to a museum this year. We went to a science centered museum, so that students could take part in some of the experiences at the end of the tour. It was quite engaging for my students, since my class is made up of mostly 'hands-on' learners. This type of museum was an ideal choice due to the fact that they offered the 'hands-on' opportunity for my class to partake in.
14. **If you were interested in bringing your students to a museum how long would you ideally spend on their website to find the appropriate information?** This actually would depend on what kind of information I would need. At my particular school, you have to fill out about 6 different forms not only about the location of your field trip, but also what kind of standards are being taught on the field trip (in place of regular classroom teaching). I would say to discover what kind of standards could be taught at that particular museum, you would have to research all it has to offer your class. I would spend as much time, discovering all that location has to offer. Ideally the website would be rather easy to manage and that information would be easily extracted from the website. So to put a time limit on it, I would have to say approximately 15 to 20 minutes total.
15. **Would whether or not an institution have tours that cater to the age of your students effect your decision to visit it?** Absolutely! I am a primary educator and not every establishment can handle (or want) children under the age of 10. I know from experience that some establishments can be not very welcoming towards children under the age of ten. I have seen firsthand what younger students are like when they are not engaged in what is going on and how quickly their attention can (and will) switch to something they find more entertaining. I have also seen firsthand what an establishment, who is not prepared for that quick switch, is like when it happens. They tend to panic and become 'unglued', so experience with a particular age group would be a wonderful advertisement on the website.
16. **Would you consider an institution website a valuable source for information materials? Lesson plans, videos, etc.?** Yes, this is a particularly good tool when it comes to that paperwork you have to fill out about the location of the field trip and the standards being taught during the field trip. It is the very way I discover if I want to go to that location and especially if I want to take my students there on a field trip.

INTERVIEW 2

Demographic

1. **Age:** 35
2. **Gender:** Female
3. **Education level:** Bachelors
4. **Computer skills:** Proficient, MS Word, Apple and PC product knowledge, various educational software: Atlas Rubicon, Skyward, Web 2.0 tools, etc.

About Museums

5. **How often do you visit museums?** 2 + times a year.
6. **Do you or have you ever had a museum membership?** In the past but not currently.
7. **Do you follow any museums on social media?** Yes.

8. **When looking for information about a museum, where do you look first?** Quality of the education programs.
9. **What is the primary information you would like to see on the home page of a museum you would like to visit?** From a teacher's perspective – cost per student and courses offered.
10. **If this information was not on the home page how long (i.e. how many clicks, how many minutes) would you consider optimal for finding what you need?** 3 clicks.
11. **What would most motivate you to visit a museum, particularly one you have not visited before?** Reputation and word of mouth from fellow educators about their positive experience.

Teaching and Museums

12. **Of what value are cultural institutions to your teaching goals?** Immense value. It allows concepts presented in the classroom to come to life.
13. **Do you ever go on field trips to cultural institutions, specifically museums?** Yes.
14. **If you were interested in bringing your students to a museum how long would you ideally spend on their website to find the appropriate information?** Ideally – 5 minutes. Realistically this usually is 20 minutes or more.
15. **Would whether or not an institution have tours that cater to the age of your students effect your decision to visit it?** YES!
16. **Would you consider an institution website a valuable source for information materials? Lesson plans, videos, etc.?** I would happily look at the materials, but generally these sources are not valuable, as they are too broad or geared to elementary or high school and not middle.

Appendix B: Observations

Two indirect observations via user diaries from controlled environments were conducted with two new participants, also identified as teachers prior to being asked to be part of the study. The goal of these activities was to see the ease of access to this information as well as participant's opinions on site aesthetics, interface, etc.

Participants were given three days (Friday 2/27/15 to Sunday 3/1/15) for completion of their diaries at their upmost convenience.

Asked to visit the Tenement Museum (<http://www.tenement.org/>), participants completed three tasks, as well as answer corresponding questions in their diaries:

Task 1: Find rates for K-12 students to visit the museum.

- *Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)*
- *Did you think this information was easy to find?*
- *What did you like most about the page where the resource was found?*
- *The least?*
- *Any additional comments?*

Task 2: Find MPs of primary source experience to play for your students.

- *Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)*
- *Did you find the source easy to access and download?*
- *What did you like most about the page where the resource was found?*
- *The least?*
- *Any additional comments?*

Task 3: Having heard that the museum's website has an "Immigration Game", you would to find and interact with it so you can see if your students will benefit from playing it.

- *Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)*
- *What did you think of the game (you don't have to play it all the way through, just enough to get a sense of what the game's goals are)?*
- *What did you like most about it?*
- *The least?*
- *Any additional comments?*

OBSERVATION 1

Task 1: Find rates for K-12 students to visit the museum.

- **Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)**

To find the ticket prices I first clicked on the visit tab. Then I clicked on group/school tours, which is not the correct place to find the ticket prices. But it did provide great information about the types of tours available. Then I went to the tours and tickets page and was able to locate the ticket price for students (\$20).

- **Did you think this information was easy to find?**

Although it took me 2 tries to find the correct information, I still thought it was easily found. The information was labeled correctly and under informative headings which allows you to scan the website quickly

- **What did you like most about the page where the resource was found?**

I liked the color scheme of this part of the website much better. It felt more welcoming and inviting compared to the monochromatic education page.

- **The least?**

N/A

- **Any additional comments?**

N/A

Task 2: Find MPs of primary source experience to play for your students.

- **Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)**

I first went to the education tab, and then clicked on activities and primary sources. From there I was able to scroll down and find the multiple primary source MP3 and PDF files.

- **Did you think this information was easy to find?**

I found it very easy to get to the page to download the primary source MP3. Everything was clearly labeled and easily found. The website is clearly separated into appropriate sections and that made trying to find the MP3 much easier.

- **What did you like most about the page where the resource was found?**

What I liked most about the website is that it seems very user-friendly and a great tool for teachers.

- **The least?**

The thing I liked least about the website was the color scheme that was used. The amount of purple and pink is a little distracting.

- **Any additional comments?**

N/A

Task 3: Having heard that the museum's website has an "Immigration Game", you would to find and interact with it so you can see if your students will benefit from playing it.

- **Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)**

The first tab I went to was the play tab because that is where I thought I would most likely find a game. The link for the game is right on top and easily accessible.

- **What did you think of the game (you don't have to play it all the way through, just enough to get a sense of what the game's goals are)**

At first I really enjoyed the game but the more I played the more confusing it got. I do not think the game is simple enough for children to play. The tasks are not clearly labeled and it can be hard to navigate at times. I also did not enjoy the video in the bottom right hand corner of the screen. It was full of great information but I was not paying it much attention because my mind was on the game.

- **What did you like most about it?**

I did like the concept of the game and allowing kids to go through a simulated immigration process and allow them to make their own decisions about their fictional life.

- **The least?**

N/A

- **Any additional comments?**

It reminded me a lot of the game Oregon Trail that was very popular when I was a child. It was something I really enjoyed playing because it allowed me to make my own choices about my fictitious family and our journey west.

OBSERVATION 2

Task 1: Find rates for K-12 students to visit the museum.

- **Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)**

While on the title page, I had to click on several different sections until I found the pricing information I needed.

- **Did you think this information was easy to find?**

The page was not hard to find but it was not simple to find. The rates were not under what I would have clicked on to find rates.

- **What did you like most about the page where the resource was found?**

I like that the page I finally found with rates for K-12 offered cut and dry price facts.

- **The least?**

I would have ended up calling the museum to answer my questions if I were taking a group of children to learn, more specifically, what the group would be experiencing especially if the group were under 8.

- **Any additional comments?**

As an adult, going to this museum alone, I would not mind reading all of the information and determining if I would like to do. It felt almost like an advertisement for a Broadway show.

Task 2: Find MPs of primary source experience to play for your students.

- **Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)**

While on the title page I clicked Education then Activities and Primary Sources.

- **Did you find the source easy to access and download?**

I found the source very easy to find and download.

- **What did you like most about the page where the resource was found?**

What I liked most was what seemed to be a lot of information at a glance.

- **The least?**

What I liked least was it started to become too busy and I did not stay on track.

- **Any additional comments?**

Additional comments are the site was quite intriguing and made me want to know more about the museum but then you almost forget about the museum as the site focuses on the tours.

Task 3: Having heard that the museum's website has an "Immigration Game", you would to find and interact with it so you can see if your students will benefit from playing it.

- **Briefly describe how you found the page (order of pages that you clicked on, or something more descriptive if you'd like)**

N/A

- **What did you think of the game (you don't have to play it all the way through, just enough to get a sense of what the game's goals are)**

N/A

- **What did you like most about it?**

N/A

- **The least?**

N/A

- **Any additional comments?**

I was unable to play the game – it did not work on my computer.

Additional comments provided by participant:

I really like the tours now that I went to the website. It made me have no interest in the actual museum but in the tours. I guess they all run together like the gift shops after Disney rides. It needs something to pull in people with younger children because it is interesting.

Susan Wolfe

“I want my students to have enjoyable experiences that are engaging as well as educational.”

Susan has been working in the New York City public school system full-time for five years. She is currently working at the school that she student-taught at so she has grown very comfortable in her role as a second grade teacher there. Susan loves her job and really cares about her students.

Teaching is a 24/7 job between the hours she spends in the classroom and the time she spends outside of school making lesson plans, grading assignments, and organizing field trips. A frequenter of museums, art galleries, and the like she wants to share the cultural experiences she has at these institutions with those that she teaches. Naturally, her personal interests do not always parallel the educational needs of her students, so she tries to follow a lot of different museums on social media to see if they have exhibits or events that will fit with what her class is or will be learning. She even looks into institutions that are beyond her geographical scope to find educational materials and ways to enhance her lessons.

On a recent trip to a museum to learn more about a piece of New York history, she noticed her students were not particularly engaged. Between the blanket nature of the tour combined with the general attention span of children under ten, it did not end well. She wishes that all places she wanted to visit were open to the age of the children she teaches. She knows that for some of them, this is the only chance they get to have these cultural experiences and she feels a great sense of responsibility to create them.



Age: 30

Occupation: Elementary
School Teacher

Location: New York, New
York

Hobbies: Traveling,
Spending time on social
media

USER SCENARIO: Susan Wolfe

Susan is planning a field trip for her students. Interested in taking them to a museum she finds that between doing necessary searches and filling out all the required paperwork to get the trip approved, the only time she is able to do research on possible venues is in the evenings on her own time.

Her main concern is finding an institution that will be welcoming to her class. Her students – all under age ten – are not always easy to keep engaged and she has seen the chaos that can ensue when they become disconnected.

To avoid any hiccups she wants to find somewhere that has a tour that will cater to both their age and education level. Furthermore, in order to support what will be taught during this trip, she would like to see what kind of educational and/or supplemental materials the museum can provide...