effective-exhibitions

You created this channel on February 7th. This is the very beginning of the **# effective-exhibitions** channel.

Set a purpose + Add an app Invite others to this channel

Thursday, February 7th

Jenny Newell 1:51 AM
Thanks for joining the conversation. I'm hoping to hear from you on **the elements that you think work particularly well in climate change/ Anthropocene exhibitions** that you have worked on or seen.
A particular interest of mine right now is developing effective **interactives** for a small display about environmental change in Australia. So I am hoping we'll gather thoughts on interactives that are particularly effective. (edited)
Another thing that would be good to hear: Do you know of audience surveys of reactions to climate change-related exhibition/s? Any surveys evaluating responses? (edited)

Friday, February 8th

Jenny Newell 12:45 AM
Angela Tiatia's 3 channel video work, 'Tuvalu'. On display in the atrium of the Australian Museum, first half of 2018. One thing I liked about this was the powerful simplicity and the meditative mode the work brought to viewers. We put banquettes nearby for people to sit on for viewing. Angela took us Tuvalu and, with a beautifully designed 3 channels of overlapping sequences of people going about their daily lives, conjured up the preciousness of the place, and also the relentlessness of having to sweep the atoll's main one clear of coral debris every day, as it is entirely overwashed each high tide. It is a requiem for Tuvalu, and Angela's simple statement of this on the label is all that was needed. (edited)
Tuvalu Tiatia with Ben at AM.jpg

Jenny Newell 1:09 AM
Feel free to add your thoughts ... no comment too big or too small! (edited)

Thursday, February 14th

Jenny Newell 5:27 PM
set the channel topic: Topic: some of the key concepts that we in the network think create effective cc exhibitions. Members will chime in with thoughts, images, comments - creating a conversation - during the 24 hours of 20 Feb, around the world.
👍 1

Friday, February 15th

Don Haas 8:05 AM
joined #effective-exhibitions along with 10 others.

Monday, February 18th

Jenny Newell 6:48 AM
Hi to all of you signed up for the Effective Exhibitions forum. In advance of the 20th, feel free to:
1. send in a message with a quick outline introducing yourself.
2. mention why you're interested in this forum - a useful flag for everyone of what you are hoping to get out of the discussion.
3. you can upload a photo of yourself to your Slack profile, so we can all 'see' each other more readily...
4. If you have extensive material to share (a document, photo essay or website) or suggestions for further reading, do post those any time.
On the 20th, I'll be encouraging you to write up your thoughts about what makes an effective climate change exhibition, and continue to chip in at several points throughout the day, seeing what others are writing, responding, moving the discussion along, as you would with a face-to-face workshop.
Looking forward to the conversation! (edited)

Henry McGhie 10:44 PM
joined #effective-exhibitions.

Jenny Newell 11:19 PM
✋Hi everyone - I'll start the introductions rolling by saying: I have been working in the climate change & museums intersection for about 8 years, first at the National Museum of Australia (Canberra), then the American Museum of Natural History (NYC), now at the Australian Museum (Sydney). I have a background in Pacific environmental history, and am co-manager of the Pacific & International Collection here. I love working with the amazingly dedicated, wonderful people who have thrown themselves into bringing deeper understanding and engagement with our alarmingly changing planet through the work of cultural institutions, through social research and activism, through many creative channels. That's why I'm running the M&CC Network, and hoping to make it easier for us to really put our heads together, in a low-carbon footprint way.

Jenny Newell 11:25 PM
I'm interested in this forum because at the Australian Museum a few of us are developing a small climate change display within a larger permanent gallery ('Surviving Australia', which focuses on the adaptations of animals). Ours will be about meeting the 'greatest adaptation challenge' for people and other species in Australia, and we are aiming to settle on the three messages / anecdotes we want people to take away with them. And we are thinking through the kinds of approaches to take: people talking on video screens, and/or digital interactives / reflective spaces / survey stations / story gathering mechanisms, to make the biggest impact. Looking forward to seeing what has worked well for others! (edited)

Tuesday, February 19th

Nina Bell 12:58 AM
joined #effective-exhibitions along with 3 others.

Kate Phillips 2:53 PM
Hello everyone, I'm looking forward to our discussion tomorrow. This is a timely discussion as I'm working with colleagues here at Museum Victoria in Melbourne, Australia putting together an exhibition proposal on the theme of Climate Change. We have an internal process of matching exhibition ideas/proposals with our exhibition venues and time slots, and at this stage the aim is to get the proposal considered and through the first filtering process. In other words, the first audience for the exhibition concept is an internal audience. From experience, we need to make the exhibition attractive - "why would visitors set foot in it?" and we have a few ideas on this. Also I will include some of our recent work on related themes

Paige Dansinger 3:06 PM
joined #effective-exhibitions.

Kate Phillips 3:39 PM
Shaping our Future City is an exhibit at Scienceworks. Visitors can see themselves doing 'pro environmental actions' and when they do the scene is transformed. It is a full-body game experience, designed for 8-12 year olds. There are four scenes which come up in turn, each with a different challenge.
In addition to the full-screen game, there is a touch screen component to the side where visitors can design their future house. They are lead through a series of steps to build a house on screen, by making choices given feedback on the 'environment friendly' score and can make changes based on this. When their house is complete it is 'built' on screen and then they see a helicopter pick it up from the small screen and places it into the large screen future city. Their house is now one part of the city-scape.
The power for this exhibit is in starting with the audience (8-12 year old children) and what they like to do (full body immersive games, seeing themselves) and then the exhibition development team went through a considered process of user testing, listening carefully to the perspectives of members of the audience. Their feedback to us was to include things they recognised and valued in their neighbourhoods (eg the local park, my garden), to leave out skyscrapers (which were in the original version) and instead show more recognisable suburban houses. They also wanted clear messages about 'good' and 'bad' behavior, such as sorting garbage to be recycled or composted. (edited)
catch garbage and sort it.JPG

Score
Pick up the rubbish and put it into the correct bin!

3:40 PM Visitors wave their arms to activate wind turbines and solar panels, gradually the CO2 pollution clears!

generate electricity.JPG ▾

Visitors see that as they plant native plants it brings native animals to their park.

plant native plants in the park.JPG ▾

Touchscreen - design your sustainable home

touch screen design challenge.JPG ▾

Design your future sustainable home
Add to our city's eco-friendly score - touch to begin

3:47 PM When complete your house will be placed into the city.

my house in my city.JPG ▾

Jenny Newell 5:25 PM

Thanks Kate! What a great concept, and realised in that very kid-friendly way. So it is up and running at Scienceworks now?

Kate Phillips 6:01 PM

Hello Jenny, Yes it is in Scienceworks as part of the 'Think Ahead' exhibition - a long term exhibition. I'd like to do a summative evaluation of it to see if it is working as we intended. I think even for visitors watching others participating in the exhibit it gives the message that everyone can be active to improve the environment and live more sustainably.

Wednesday, February 20th

Jenny Newell 5:40 AM

Excellent! Thanks Kate - seems an exceptionally engaging way to convey that core message; it'll be really interesting to see what of the summative evaluation are, if you are able to get that underway.

★ Added to your starred items

Good morning from the east coast of Australia, everyone! 😀 Here we are in the first part of the day that is going to connect us up in a long ribbon of conversation and sharing of ideas, images, reflections, unfurling as the earth turns.... welcome to the Effective Exhibitions forum!

If we were all meeting here together in person I would be offering you ☕coffee and muffins, and also an acknowledgement of country.
You'll have to imagine the first, but for the second, *I want to acknowledge that the land that I work on is Gadigal country. The Gadigal are part of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of the land between the three great rivers that encircle what we now call Sydney. Their land was never ceded. I give my gratitude for their ongoing custodianship of the land and acknowledge their leaders: past, present and those coming forward.* (edited)

Henry McGhie 5:51 AM

Hi climate and museum friends. My background is as a bird ecologist, very passionate about promoting conservation of natural world, and that involves people. I'll post some things tomorrow, ahead of the 20th, as I'm out an about that day. All the best Henry

Hi this is extracted from a chapter I did for a book (Handbook of Climate Change Communication, 3 vols) a few years back.

This extract sets out some reflections on the ways in which museums can approach climate change engagement, based on recent experiences of the re-design of a permanent natural history gallery and a climate change focused exhibition at the Manchester Museum, part of the University of Manchester (Manchester, UK). It emphasises the importance of engaging with people in affective and behavioural (personal action) terms, rather than focussing solely on climate change information. It also emphasises the importance of providing people with opportunities to express their ideas, values and concerns, promoting critical thinking, civic discourse and climate change action. Through providing such opportunities, museums could provide more effective service to society, supporting and enabling positive action directed towards climate change mitigation and adaptation. Museum exhibitions and events can go beyond merely presenting people with information (held to be objective or otherwise) to connecting them with, and in, debates and discourses. Involving academic thinking and academics can support the development of fruitful museum experiences, although their work can require 'repurposing' or revising to be suitable for general public 'consumption'. Those working with topics on a day-to-day basis may not be best placed to reinterpret them for general audiences, using specialist language, or working with timescales that are difficult to imagine. The nature and scale of the challenges faced due to climate change can lead to academics presenting narratives that leave a perplexed public unsure of what it can do, inhibiting public action (see Moser, 2016, Swaisgood and Shepperd, 2010). This gives a clear role for museum workers as intermediaries and interpreters, providing opportunities for dialogue and the tailoring of messages to people, mixing messages of hope with reality, information with activity, and promoting personal and collective action.

Henry McGhie 5:55 AM

Suggested key points to consider for climate change engagement in museums

- Be clear on what you are trying to achieve: are you interested in what people do in the museum, or beyond the museum?
- Ask yourself seriously whether you are enabling or disabling climate action
- How are you promoting critical thinking?
- Be clear on what assumptions you are making about your audience, who they are, what they know and what they want from their visit
- If you are not confident in the topic, don't be tempted to play down the science or importance of climate change, or to present false 'balance'
- Don't overinvest space and time in persuading people climate change is 'real': focus on critical thinking skills, and imagining and exploring solutions instead
- Disrupt general narratives of hopelessness and inevitability to encourage positive action: tell a different story
- Symbols, images and ideas can be just as important as graphs and facts—or even more important
- Use creative experiences to encourage people to find their own words, ideas and symbols that can promote positive actions around climate change
- Balance challenge with support, and positive and negative information
- Be both brave and empathetic

- Give people some agency: allow them to imagine and create solutions that work for them
- Give people plenty of chances to respond to exhibitions and events
- Allow people to connect issues and solutions of similar scales
- Create a platform for people to explore and express ideas around citizenship and the world they want, and to explore the impacts of that world both nearby and farther afield.

👍 3

2 replies Last reply 4 days ago

Jenny Newell 5:58 AM
Hello Henry! Great to have you on board. 🖐 Thanks for the extract. Henry is one of the leading lights in the international (and inter-governmental) conversation about the role of museums within the climate crisis; and he's excellent at bringing this community together to really advance thought and action (viz. the Climate Change & Museums symposium in Manchester last April).

Henry McGhie 6:01 AM
We had an exhibition at Manchester Museum in 2016 called Climate Control, to disrupt the pervading sense of helplessness there is around climate change. The exhibition had 2 entrances- explore the past, and explore the future. The visitor had to make a choice, they couldn't be passive.

2 entrances.png ▾

EXPLORE THE PAST
EXPLORE THE FUTURE

1 reply 4 days ago

Henry McGhie 6:02 AM
The exhibition was divided into two adjoining rooms. The black half explored the history of industrialisation, the impacts of industry around the world, including in the Arctic. The white half was an ideas lab to imagine and design the future

climate control overview.png ▾

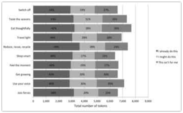
6:03 AM People added black dots to a great big white wall to show how we all make an impact. Black dots represented carbon footprints

dots.png ▾

TOGETHER WE ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

People voted on the answers to 10 questions. The point of all this is to give opportunities for people to express themselves, and to find out what others think, and break out of echo chambers. It is amazing how many people care about nature, and think about the impact of their lives. The aim of the whole exhibition, as with everything I'm interested in, is about promoting constructive thinking, feeling and doing.

votes.png ▾



Henry McGhie 6:07 AM
As a last bit from me, I put together a list of 15 things I think museums 'should' be doing in relation to climate change.

1 reply 4 days ago

Henry McGhie 6:08 AM
1. Museums should not allow themselves to be irrelevant from society.

2. Museums should acknowledge that what they do normalises people's views on what is acceptable in society.

3. It is not enough to aim to connect people with the museum. The museum should aim to connect people with the world.

4. Museums have a wealth of resources that can contribute positively, often uniquely, towards climate action. They should mobilise these resources to address this, and other societal challenges.

5. Many people are concerned about climate change, but do not see the connection between their own lives and the wider world. Museums should help them make that connection.

6. The museum should help people explore the past, the present and possible futures. Museums should help people understand the options they have beyond the museum in relation to museum topics, and help them understand the implications of their different choices. For example, museums should promote climate action rather than climate damage, whether or not climate change is foregrounded or even presented.

7. They should develop a vision of a better future, working with people individually and collectively to shape and realise that future. This is a different vision from what is in mass media.
8. They should help people explore pictures bigger than themselves: framing discussions, promoting discussion of future[s] and disrupting a sense of hopelessness, and connecting possible choices with their impacts and consequences.
9. Museums need to keep abreast of research on topics relating to their collections, in the context of a rapidly changing world. They cannot do this alone, but need to work in partnership with researchers and organisations involved in climate action in diverse ways.

10. Museums should aim for deep and rich cultural experiences, rather than shallow, populist or solely commercially driven ones.

11. Museums should acknowledge that they are a medium that is not dependent on mass media or on neoliberal marketing.

12. Museums should be up-front about what they hold to be important, and be able to articulate why they hold particular topics to be important in reference to the real world.

13. Museums should base their decisions and concerns on robust, critically reflective and evaluated information.

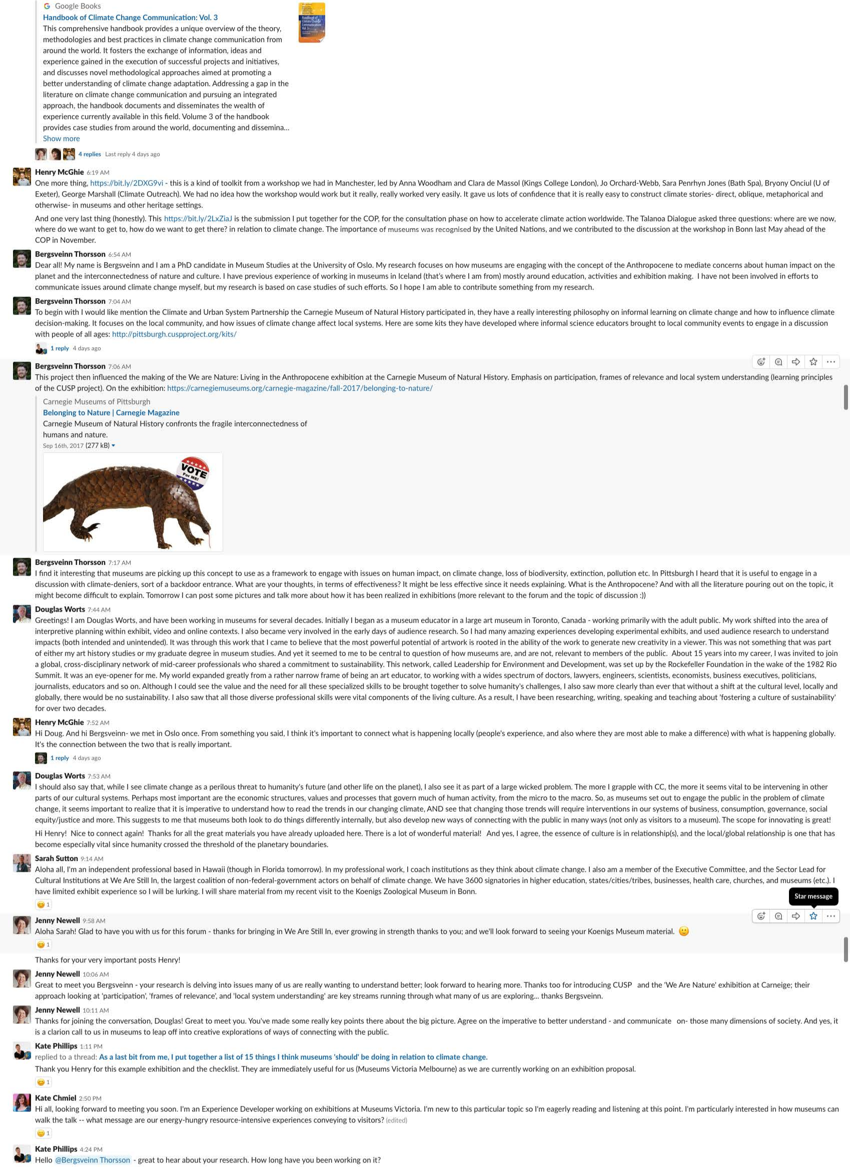
14. In aiming to be honest and trustworthy, museums should neither use heavy-hitting information uncritically, nor disguise serious issues. They should deploy serious information and issues sensitively with an aim of promoting constructive engagement.

15. Museums should provide both challenge and support, considered alongside one another. In providing more challenge and more support they will provide people with even deeper, richer and more impactful opportunities to connect with real-world issues and challenges.
Thank you. Henry

💥 1

Jenny Newell 6:10 AM
Thank you Henry! 🙏

Henry McGhie 6:14 AM
You're very welcome Jenny. I'm quite a newbie to Slack so a bit clunky with it. I hope it all goes well tomorrow! There are loads of examples of how people have used, critiqued and thought about museums and climate change in the Handbooks of Climate Change Communication. People can get an idea of what is in them from Google Books https://bit.ly/2SVW72P. And don't forget to direct people to your great book Jenny.



Google Books

Handbook of Climate Change Communication: Vol. 3

This comprehensive handbook provides a unique overview of the theory, methodologies and best practices in climate change communication from around the world. It fosters the exchange of information, ideas and experience gained in the execution of successful projects and initiatives, and discusses novel methodological approaches aimed at promoting a better understanding of climate change adaptation. Addressing a gap in the literature on climate change communication and pursuing an integrated approach, the handbook documents and disseminates the wealth of experience currently available in this field. Volume 3 of the handbook provides case studies from around the world, documenting and dissemina...

Show more

4 replies Last reply 4 days ago

Henry McGhie 6:19 AM

One more thing, https://bit.ly/2DXG9vi - this is a kind of toolkit from a workshop we had in Manchester, led by Anna Woodham and Clara de Massol (Kings College London), Jo Orchard-Webb, Sara Penrhyn Jones (Bath Spa), Bryony Onciul (U of Exeter), George Marshall (Climate Outreach). We had no idea how the workshop would work but it really, really worked very easily. It gave us lots of confidence that it is really easy to construct climate stories- direct, oblique, metaphorical and otherwise- in museums and other heritage settings.

And one very last thing (honestly). This https://bit.ly/2LxZiaJ is the submission I put together for the COP, for the consultation phase on how to accelerate climate action worldwide. The Talanoa Dialogue asked three questions: where are we now, where do we want to get to, how do we want to get there? in relation to climate change. The importance of museums was recognised by the United Nations, and we contributed to the discussion at the workshop in Bonn last May ahead of the COP in November.

Bergsveinn Thorsson 6:54 AM

Dear all! My name is Bergsveinn and I am a PhD candidate in Museum Studies at the University of Oslo. My research focuses on how museums are engaging with the concept of the Anthropocene to mediate concerns about human impact on the planet and the interconnectedness of nature and culture. I have previous experience of working in museums in Iceland (that's where I am from) mostly around education, activities and exhibition making. I have not been involved in efforts to communicate issues around climate change myself, but my research is based on case studies of such efforts. So I hope I am able to contribute something from my research.

Bergsveinn Thorsson 7:04 AM

To begin with I would like mention the Climate and Urban System Partnership the Carnegie Museum of Natural History participated in, they have a really interesting philosophy on informal learning on climate change and how to influence climate decision-making. It focuses on the local community, and how issues of climate change affect local systems. Here are some kits they have developed where informal science educators brought to local community events to engage in a discussion with people of all ages: http://pittsburgh.cuspproject.org/kits/

1 reply 4 days ago

Bergsveinn Thorsson 7:06 AM

This project then influenced the making of the We are Nature: Living in the Anthropocene exhibition at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Emphasis on participation, frames of relevance and local system understanding (learning principles of the CUSP project). On the exhibition: https://carnegiemuseums.org/carnegie-magazine/fall-2017/belonging-to-nature/

Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh

Belonging to Nature | Carnegie Magazine

Carnegie Museum of Natural History confronts the fragile interconnectedness of humans and nature.

Sep 16th, 2017 (277 kB) ▾

Bergsveinn Thorsson 7:17 AM

I find it interesting that museums are picking up this concept to use as a framework to engage with issues on human impact, on climate change, loss of biodiversity, extinction, pollution etc. In Pittsburgh I heard that it is useful to engage in a discussion with climate-deniers, sort of a backdoor entrance. What are your thoughts, in terms of effectiveness? It might be less effective since it needs explaining. What is the Anthropocene? And with all the literature pouring out on the topic, it might become difficult to explain. Tomorrow I can post some pictures and talk more about how it has been realized in exhibitions (more relevant to the forum and the topic of discussion :))

Douglas Worts 7:44 AM

Greetings! I am Douglas Worts, and have been working in museums for several decades. Initially I began as a museum educator in a large art museum in Toronto, Canada - working primarily with the adult public. My work shifted into the area of interpretive planning within exhibit, video and online contexts. I also became very involved in the early days of audience research. So I had many amazing experiences developing experimental exhibits, and used audience research to understand impacts (both intended and unintended). It was through this work that I came to believe that the most powerful potential of artwork is rooted in the ability of the work to generate new creativity in a viewer. This was not something that was part of either my art history studies or my graduate degree in museum studies. And yet it seemed to me to be central to question of how museums are, and are not, relevant to members of the public. About 15 years into my career, I was invited to join a global, cross-disciplinary network of mid-career professionals who shared a commitment to sustainability. This network, called Leadership for Environment and Development, was set up by the Rockefeller Foundation in the wake of the 1982 Rio Summit. It was an eye-opener for me. My world expanded greatly from a rather narrow frame of being an art educator, to working with a wides spectrum of doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, economists, business executives, politicians, journalists, educators and so on. Although I could see the value and the need for all these specialized skills to be brought together to solve humanity's challenges, I also saw more clearly than ever that without a shift at the cultural level, locally and globally, there would be no sustainability. I also saw that all those diverse professional skills were vital components of the living culture. As a result, I have been researching, writing, speaking and teaching about 'fostering a culture of sustainability' for over two decades.

Henry McGhie 7:52 AM

Hi Doug. And hi Bergsveinn- we met in Oslo once. From something you said, I think it's important to connect what is happening locally (people's experience, and also where they are most able to make a difference) with what is happening globally. It's the connection between the two that is really important.

1 reply 4 days ago

Douglas Worts 7:53 AM

I should also say that, while I see climate change as a perilous threat to humanity's future (and other life on the planet), I also see it as part of a large wicked problem. The more I grapple with CC, the more it seems vital to be intervening in other parts of our cultural systems. Perhaps most important are the economic structures, values and processes that govern much of human activity, from the micro to the macro. So, as museums set out to engage the public in the problem of climate change, it seems important to realize that it is imperative to understand how to read the trends in our changing climate, AND see that changing those trends will require interventions in our systems of business, consumption, governance, social equity/justice and more. This suggests to me that museums both look to do things differently internally, but also develop new ways of connecting with the public in many ways (not only as visitors to a museum). The scope for innovating is great!

Hi Henry! Nice to connect again! Thanks for all the great materials you have already uploaded here. There is a lot of wonderful material! And yes, I agree, the essence of culture is in relationship(s), and the local/global relationship is one that has become especially vital since humanity crossed the threshold of the planetary boundaries.

Sarah Sutton 9:14 AM

Aloha all, I'm an independent professional based in Hawaii (though in Florida tomorrow). In my professional work, I coach institutions as they think about climate change. I also am a member of the Executive Committee, and the Sector Lead for Cultural Institutions at We Are Still In, the largest coalition of non-federal-government actors on behalf of climate change. We have 3600 signatories in higher education, states/cities/tribes, businesses, health care, churches, and museums (etc.). I have limited exhibit experience so I will be lurking. I will share material from my recent visit to the Koenigs Zoological Museum in Bonn.

😊 1

Jenny Newell 9:58 AM

Aloha Sarah! Glad to have you with us for this forum - thanks for bringing in We Are Still In, ever growing in strength thanks to you; and we'll look forward to seeing your Koenigs Museum material. 😊

😊 1

Thanks for your very important posts Henry!

Jenny Newell 10:06 AM

Great to meet you Bergsveinn - your research is delving into issues many of us are really wanting to understand better; look forward to hearing more. Thanks too for introducing CUSP and the 'We Are Nature' exhibition at Carneige; their approach looking at 'participation', 'frames of relevance', and 'local system understanding' are key streams running through what many of us are exploring... thanks Bergsveinn.

Jenny Newell 10:11 AM

Thanks for joining the conversation, Douglas! Great to meet you. You've made some really key points there about the big picture. Agree on the imperative to better understand - and communicate on- those many dimensions of society. And yes, it is a clarion call to us in museums to leap off into creative explorations of ways of connecting with the public.

Kate Phillips 1:11 PM

replied to a thread: As a last bit from me, I put together a list of 15 things I think museums 'should' be doing in relation to climate change.

Thank you Henry for this example exhibition and the checklist. They are immediately useful for us (Museums Victoria Melbourne) as we are currently working on an exhibition proposal.

😊 1

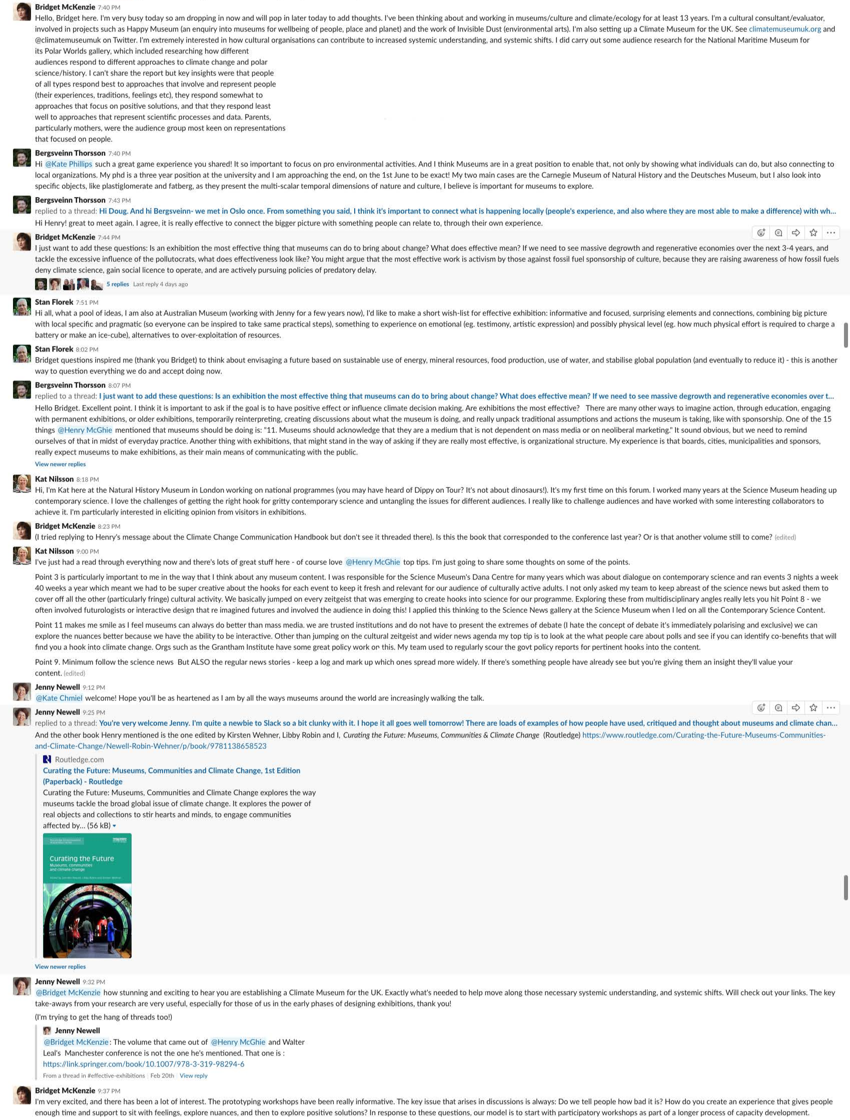
Kate Chmiel 2:50 PM

Hi all, looking forward to meeting you soon. I'm an Experience Developer working on exhibitions at Museums Victoria. I'm new to this particular topic so I'm eagerly reading and listening at this point. I'm particularly interested in how museums can walk the talk -- what message are our energy-hungry resource-intensive experiences conveying to visitors? (edited)

😊 1

Kate Phillips 4:24 PM

Hello @Bergsveinn Thorsson - great to hear about your research. How long have you been working on it?



Bridget McKenzie 7:40 PM
Hello, Bridget here. I'm very busy today so am dropping in now and will pop in later today to add thoughts. I've been thinking about and working in museums/culture and climate/ecology for at least 13 years. I'm a cultural consultant/evaluator, involved in projects such as Happy Museum (an enquiry into museums for wellbeing of people, place and planet) and the work of Invisible Dust (environmental arts). I'm also setting up a Climate Museum for the UK. See climatemuseumuk.org and @climatemuseumuk on Twitter. I'm extremely interested in how cultural organisations can contribute to increased systemic understanding, and systemic shifts. I did carry out some audience research for the National Maritime Museum for its Polar Worlds gallery, which included researching how different audiences respond to different approaches to climate change and polar science/history. I can't share the report but key insights were that people of all types respond best to approaches that involve and represent people (their experiences, traditions, feelings etc), they respond somewhat to approaches that focus on positive solutions, and that they respond least well to approaches that represent scientific processes and data. Parents, particularly mothers, were the audience group most keen on representations that focused on people.

Bergsveinn Thorsson 8:40 PM
Hi @Kate Phillips such a great game experience you shared! It so important to focus on pro environmental activities. And I think Museums are in a great position to enable that, not only by showing what individuals can do, but also connecting to local organizations. My phd is a three year position at the university and I am approaching the end, on the 1st June to be exact! My two main cases are the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and the Deutsches Museum, but I also look into specific objects, like plastiglomerate and fatberg, as they present the multi-scalar temporal dimensions of nature and culture, I believe is important for museums to explore.

Bergsveinn Thorsson 7:43 PM
replied to a thread: **Hi Doug. And hi Bergsveinn- we met in Oslo once. From something you said, I think it's important to connect what is happening locally (people's experience, and also where they are most able to make a difference) with wh...**
Hi Henry! great to meet again. I agree, it is really effective to connect the bigger picture with something people can relate to, through their own experience.

Bridget McKenzie 7:44 PM
I just want to add these questions: Is an exhibition the most effective thing that museums can do to bring about change? What does effective mean? If we need to see massive degrowth and regenerative economies over the next 3-4 years, and tackle the excessive influence of the pollutocrats, what does effectiveness look like? You might argue that the most effective work is activism by those against fossil fuel sponsorship of culture, because they are raising awareness of how fossil fuels deny climate science, gain social licence to operate, and are actively pursuing policies of predatory delay.

5 replies Last reply 4 days ago

Stan Florek 7:51 PM
Hi all, what a pool of ideas, I am also at Australian Museum (working with Jenny for a few years now), I'd like to make a short wish-list for effective exhibition: informative and focused, surprising elements and connections, combining big picture with local specific and pragmatic (so everyone can be inspired to take same practical steps), something to experience on emotional (eg. testimony, artistic expression) and possibly physical level (eg. how much physical effort is required to charge a battery or make an ice-cube), alternatives to over-exploitation of resources.

Stan Florek 8:02 PM
Bridget questions inspired me (thank you Bridget) to think about envisaging a future based on sustainable use of energy, mineral resources, food production, use of water, and stabilise global population (and eventually to reduce it) - this is another way to question everything we do and accept doing now.

Bergsveinn Thorsson 8:07 PM
replied to a thread: **I just want to add these questions: Is an exhibition the most effective thing that museums can do to bring about change? What does effective mean? If we need to see massive degrowth and regenerative economies over t...**
Hello Bridget. Excellent point. I think it is important to ask if the goal is to have positive effect or influence climate decision making. Are exhibitions the most effective? There are many other ways to imagine action, through education, engaging with permanent exhibitions, or older exhibitions, temporarily reinterpreting, creating discussions about what the museum is doing, and really unpack traditional assumptions and actions the museum is taking, like with sponsorship. One of the 15 things @Henry McGhie mentioned that museums should be doing is: "11. Museums should acknowledge that they are a medium that is not dependent on mass media or on neoliberal marketing." It sound obvious, but we need to remind ourselves of that in midst of everyday practice. Another thing with exhibitions, that might stand in the way of asking if they are really most effective, is organizational structure. My experience is that boards, cities, municipalities and sponsors, really expect museums to make exhibitions, as their main means of communicating with the public.
View newer replies

Kat Nilsson 8:18 PM
Hi, I'm Kat here at the Natural History Museum in London working on national programmes (you may have heard of Dippy on Tour? It's not about dinosaurs!). It's my first time on this forum. I worked many years at the Science Museum heading up contemporary science. I love the challenges of getting the right hook for gritty contemporary science and untangling the issues for different audiences. I really like to challenge audiences and have worked with some interesting collaborators to achieve it. I'm particularly interested in eliciting opinion from visitors in exhibitions.

Bridget McKenzie 8:23 PM
(I tried replying to Henry's message about the Climate Change Communication Handbook but don't see it threaded there). Is this the book that corresponded to the conference last year? Or is that another volume still to come? (edited)

Kat Nilsson 9:00 PM
I've just had a read through everything now and there's lots of great stuff here - of course love @Henry McGhie top tips. I'm just going to share some thoughts on some of the points.

Point 3 is particularly important to me in the way that I think about any museum content. I was responsible for the Science Museum's Dana Centre for many years which was about dialogue on contemporary science and ran events 3 nights a week 40 weeks a year which meant we had to be super creative about the hooks for each event to keep it fresh and relevant for our audience of culturally active adults. I not only asked my team to keep abreast of the science news but asked them to cover off all the other (particularly fringe) cultural activity. We basically jumped on every zeitgeist that was emerging to create hooks into science for our programme. Exploring these from multidisciplinary angles really lets you hit Point 8 - we often involved futurologists or interactive design that re imagined futures and involved the audience in doing this! I applied this thinking to the Science News gallery at the Science Museum when I led on all the Contemporary Science Content.

Point 11 makes me smile as I feel museums can always do better than mass media. we are trusted institutions and do not have to present the extremes of debate (I hate the concept of debate it's immediately polarising and exclusive) we can explore the nuances better because we have the ability to be interactive. Other than jumping on the cultural zeitgeist and wider news agenda my top tip is to look at the what people care about polls and see if you can identify co-benefits that will find you a hook into climate change. Orgs such as the Grantham Institute have some great policy work on this. My team used to regularly scour the govt policy reports for pertinent hooks into the content.

Point 9. Minimum follow the science news But ALSO the regular news stories - keep a log and mark up which ones spread more widely. If there's something people have already see but you're giving them an insight they'll value your content. (edited)

Jenny Newell 9:12 PM
@Kate Chmiel welcome! Hope you'll be as heartened as I am by all the ways museums around the world are increasingly walking the talk.

Jenny Newell 9:25 PM
replied to a thread: **You're very welcome Jenny. I'm quite a newbie to Slack so a bit clunky with it. I hope it all goes well tomorrow! There are loads of examples of how people have used, critiqued and thought about museums and climate chan...**
And the other book Henry mentioned is the one edited by Kirsten Wehner, Libby Robin and I, *Curating the Future: Museums, Communities & Climate Change* (Routledge) https://www.routledge.com/Curating-the-Future-Museums-Communities-and-Climate-Change/Newell-Robin-Wehner/p/book/9781138658523

> Routledge.com
> **Curating the Future: Museums, Communities and Climate Change, 1st Edition (Paperback) - Routledge**
> Curating the Future: Museums, Communities and Climate Change explores the way museums tackle the broad global issue of climate change. It explores the power of real objects and collections to stir hearts and minds, to engage communities affected by... (56 kB)

View newer replies

Jenny Newell 9:32 PM
@Bridget McKenzie how stunning and exciting to hear you are establishing a Climate Museum for the UK. Exactly what's needed to help move along those necessary systemic understanding, and systemic shifts. Will check out your links. The key take-aways from your research are very useful, especially for those of us in the early phases of designing exhibitions, thank you!

(I'm trying to get the hang of threads too!)

> **Jenny Newell**
> @Bridget McKenzie: The volume that came out of @Henry McGhie and Walter Leal's Manchester conference is not the one he's mentioned. That one is :
> https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-98294-6
> From a thread in #effective-exhibitions | Feb 20th | View reply

Bridget McKenzie 9:37 PM
I'm very excited, and there has been a lot of interest. The prototyping workshops have been really informative. The key issue that arises in discussions is always: Do we tell people how bad it is? How do you create an experience that gives people enough time and support to sit with feelings, explore nuances, and then to explore positive solutions? In response to these questions, our model is to start with participatory workshops as part of a longer process of capacity development.

Jenny Newell 9:54 PM
replied to a thread: **I just want to add these questions: Is an exhibition the most effective thing that museums can do to bring about change? What does effective mean? If we need to see massive degrowth and regenerative economies over t...**
I agree, @Bergsveinn Thorsson with your points here, and yes there is an expectation that exhibitions are our main method of communication. Further to @Bridget McKenzie's question, I think exhibitions are **one** way for a museum to be effective. Only ever one of the ways, and a rare one at that. I think for many of us the opportunity to create an exhibition, and one on cc or anthropocene, comes only occasionally...which is partly why I felt the need to have an international brainstorm about it! Most of the communication and engagement work we do at the AM (and I know others are similar) is much more mobile, with multi-faceted programs and outreach, running workshops that help people to find ways to have their voices heard, rolling out community science projects, designing better sessions for schools, greening the museum's operations, etc etc. Exhibitions are an important additional mode, for validating the climate crisis (giving it space in the museum = it matters) and offering another mode of engagement. But certainly not the only, or necessarily the most effective one. More evaluation of all those modes needed!

View newer replies

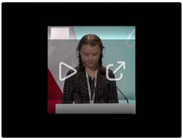
Hi @Kat Nilsson - glad to hear you are particularly keen to elicit opinion from exhibition visitors. I think @Henry McGhie's methods for gathering some broad brush reactions from audiences in their Manchester exhibition are good to think through... we're trying to develop a few screen-based survey-style or a guided story-recording booth method of gauging attitudes and perceptions of CC in the Australian context, while also asking a few questions that would help us to evaluate the effectiveness of the display on various fronts. Not sure if the survey approach is just too dull as a method to inspire people to stop and spend a bit of time reflecting and answering. But it would be the simplest. Hoping to hear what others have tried... (edited)

Jenny Newell 10:51 PM
@Bridget McKenzie I can imagine the prototyping workshops being very exciting! Agreed, the balance between alarm and comfort is a constant negotiation. I find the research and conclusions about this dynamic by George Marshall and Climate Outreach are important. https://climateoutreach.org/resources/guide-science-of-climate-change-communication/
And I was talking yesterday to a wonderful historian of ideas, institutions and more (Tamson Pietsch), who mentioned Bonnie Honig - her book "Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair" https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/the-politics-of-public-things/4630284 ... she writes on Democracy postulating "public things--infrastructure, monuments, libraries--that citizens use, care for, repair, and are gathered up by." ...'gathered up' she means in the sense of being held in safety, cared for, as a parent gathers up a child... this chimes with me, this concept of our cultural institutions being there to hold us in safety when certainty and safety is rapidly slipping away, helping to support and nurture us with the knowledge we most likely need, peopling what can otherwise can be felt like going it alone, and offering ideas for finding our own ways forward. (edited)

Radio National
The Politics of Public Things
Can democracy survive the neoliberal demand to privatise everything?

Jenny Newell 10:59 PM
Thanks for your thoughts, @Stan Florek - and for sharing the link with me, earlier, to that powerful call to action - and alarm - from Greta Thunberg (15), speaking at the United Nations Climate Summit in Katowice, Poland, late last year - link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqhGk3O7_uI

YouTube | 8M
Greta Thunberg . Activista climática ▾



Hilary Jennings 11:00 PM
Hello all! Great thread - and what a resource for others. Hopefully it can be shared in someway for those who haven't connected today via Slack? My role is Director of the Happy Museum which Bridget has already mentioned and which focuses on how museums can support the Wellbeing of People, Place and Planet. The work that museums do in response ranges widely across museum activity. This case study on our website gives a flavour.http://happymuseumproject.org/thematic-case-study-smart-use-resources-building-resilience-stewardship-future/ (edited)

Jenny Newell 11:03 PM
Thanks @Kat Nilsson for your responses to Henry's points - full of things to ponder and investigate.

Jenny Newell 11:20 PM
Hi @Hilary Jennings - yes, it would be good to share the convo after - will find a way to do that, if everyone's happy about it (I'll check in at the end). Excellent case study thanks! I particularly like Oxford's " Story Museum" - and the mood trees at the entrance and exit to add leaves to with indicative colours and comments. And the idea of leaving comments on tags near objects. The Other Worlds exhibition receiving 6,000 comments in 18 days is pretty impressive!

Sofie Öberg Magnusson 11:30 PM
Hi, this is Lena and Sofie from The National Museums of World Culture in Sweden. We write to you from Gothenburg where we last week opened the exhibition Human = Nature about consumption and the future of our planet. Lena is the exhibition producer and have led the Project with this exhibiton. Sofie is working with sustainability overarching in the organization, which consists of four museums all in all.

The exhibition is an in house production based both on the vast Collections that the organization manage as well as several ongoing research Projects. It's one of the most relevant themes of our times, but it's also tricky to address as a museum organization. We took on the challenge Confident in that our objects could provide inspiration to other ways to consume and relate to Earth and to other living creatures. We cannot say yet if we succeeded but there seems to be a big interest from the public, schools and media.

11:32 PM A scene from the exhibition Human = Nature
kokong2.jpg ▾

One important message in the exhibition (together with Worry, be happy!)
neonskylt.jpg ▾

Be happy, worry!

We have a lot to read Before we are up to date with the discussion, but in relation to interactives we are working together with research Projects and conduct "Citizen science" where exhibition visitors will provide new data to the research teams through their interactions

Jenny Newell 11:39 PM
😀👍
👍 1

Hilary Jennings 11:40 PM
There are two broad perspectives that I would like to add into the mix around how an exhibition could be framed - one focuses in on how museums can be places that show us how we change. Our collections can how us how inventive and creative we are – in finding solutions to problems in technology, medicine, transport – and to consider the implications of these changes....
They show us how our societies can change their values and behaviours – for example the abolition of slavery, votes for women and changing attitudes to disability.....
Are there ways that museum collections could be reframed to reflect back to us how we are capable of the changes necessary to face challenges such as Climate Change in inventive, creative and world-changing ways.

The other perspective might seem somewhat tangential but research by psychologists shows us that experiencing a sense of awe and wonder boosts individual wellbeing and encourages pro-social behaviour https://bit.ly/2Hw6So3 One experiment references uses a T Rex skeleton to induce awe. It would be interesting to think generating awe could be part of an exhibition?

Association for Psychological Science

All About Awe

Science Explores How Life's Marvels Elevate Cognition and Emotion (106 kB)

Thursday, February 21st

Nicole Heller 12:33 AM

Hello, my name is Nicole Heller. I am curator of the Anthropocene at Carnegie Museum of Natural History. We are really diving into public programming using this broad concept as a way to explore climate change and other interrelated envt-social challenges. We are Nature as @Bergsveinn Thorsson introduced was the first exhibition on this concept. Which was very well received by our visitors. And they really want more! so to keep the conversation going, and the topic front of mind, we moved fast to turn a small, space into the Anthropocene Living Room. This is a space that combines object displays, with art, and current books and science in the news. The ultimate goal is to use the space for activating and convening conversation and helping people get more comfortable with this scientific concept so that it doesn't feel so scary or political but just current science. the goal of the object case was to connect objects across diverse collections to the scientific and cultural debate about when the Anthropocene starts to illustrate how human activities across time can have earth changing (and surprising) impacts. The space is still under-development. I will include a few pictures here but they do not show the space fully complete. We are very eager to network with others about how we can use the museum to inspire comprehension and action on these complex global change issues.

IMG_4795.JPG

😊 2 😀 1

and one other picture (again not complete). but just to give a sense of the "living room" under development

IMG_4808.JPG

Sofie Öberg Magnusson 12:41 AM

@Bridget McKenzie regarding the balance between hope and despear we tried to include the room for both in our exhibition. Sadly Lena had to leave so unfortunately you have to make due with my limited insight in the process, but we had the help of researchers Gró Einarsdottir and also have a recording from psycholocy researcher Maria Ojala about constructive hope as opposed to optimism and promoting a "don't worry, it'll be fine"-attitude. We try to bring forward also the negative feelings as an important agent for change, we need to be angry, worried and scared, but not to the point where we become paralyzed. We also have a room for contemplation in relation to this part of the exhibition, a meditation space if you will

Nicole Heller 1:34 AM

I have not been able to read everything as I can only pop in and out of this conversation. But one question I have for the group: **What do you think about museums providing specific actions people can do, versus provoking visitors with questions, such as "What are you going to do?"** I ask this because often the so-called easy solutions that are provided for individuals are not sufficient to match the scale of the problems, and we typically do not want to promote policy solutions that may sufficient. so what about just provoking people with questions? Any experience or advice with this?

Sarah Sutton 1:38 AM

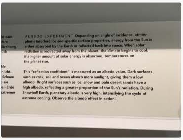
Hi @Bergsveinn Thorsson Can you tell me what this is: plastiglomerate and fatberg ? Mahalo.

1 reply 4 days ago

Sarah Sutton 1:46 AM

During my visit to the Planet 3.0 exhibit, and others at the Koenig Zoological (Natural History) Museum in Bonn https://www.zfmk.de/de/museum/sonderausstellungen/planet-30-verlaengert I felt they were stronger in the environment exhibit and practical, yet not energetic in the climate change (3.0) exhibit. The 3.0 exhibit described the five previous extinctions and then addressed human impacts creating potentially our (sixth) extinction with a section on how research is helping us understand what's happening, and how research is critical for solving our problems. The English translation labels (far fewer than the German so I had less information to work with to draw this opinion) aksed questions of the learner but didn't call to action. I have no photos of them as I was pretty interested in the research process and forgot to take photos. I've included some label/images that nicely demonstrate the albedo effect which I thought was dealt with well. But other labels left "change" too comfortably in the realm of normal, in my opinion, and with not as much charge for responsibility and action as I had hoped for. Has anyone else seen it and have a different feeling?

Text for Albedo.JPG

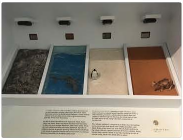


ALBEDO EXPERIMENT Depending on angle of incidence, atmospheric interference and specific surface properties, energy from the Sun is either absorbed by the Earth or reflected back into space. When solar radiation is redirected away from the planet, the climate begins to cool. If a higher amount of solar energy is absorbed, temperatures on the planet rise.

This "reflection coefficient" is measured as an albedo value. Dark surfaces such as rock, soil and ocean absorb more sunlight, giving them a low albedo. Bright surfaces such as ice, snow and pale desert sands have a high albedo, reflecting a greater proportion of the Sun's radiation. During Snowball Earth, planetary albedo is very high, intensifying the cycle of extreme cooling. Observe the albedo effect in action!

In low light - no albedo

albedo shade.JPG



Lights on - albedo effect.

Albedo bright.JPG ▾

Sarah Sutton 2:05 AM

Hello @Hilary Jennings So you are suggesting two frames: awe and ability to change. I like them very much and I am wondering when they are a frame or a themes (can be different in each setting), and can we have a running list here of frames/themes but also of tools? For me, that sort of naming practice shortcuts the early-stage wanderings that often precede development of a program or exhibit. We have awe/creativity/capacity for change/worry & be happy and for tools we have talk-back opportunities, objects, calls-to-action, and to-action-lists for visitors. (edited)

👍 1

Sarah Sutton 2:17 AM

@Nicole Heller I feel this is a both/and answer. We must do both (offer actions and lead to action) and we must also 1) build environment and climate literacy in individuals to equip them to successfully evaluate needs and options of continued new behaviors and choices, and 2) elevate actions from individual to collective to scale change. If an exhibit can bring a visitor from the start (raising awareness) to personal changes to thoughtful collective action, it has done its job.

Sarah Sutton 2:44 AM

And the crowd goes wild for @Henry McGhie and his list!

Jaya Beange 2:44 AM

Hello everyone and good morning from Winnipeg, Canada. I am the Senior Exhibit Designer at the Manitoba Museum, and also the Chair of our Sustainability Committee. We have a Human and Natural History Museum, a Science Gallery, and a Planetarium.

We're really just starting to get our feet wet when it comes to Sustainability, both in operations and in content development. I am thankful for all these great examples and resources to explore. I love the idea of awe and wonder helping to inspire action.

Thank you for coordinating Jenny!

🙂 1

Don Haas 3:07 AM

Hi All. I'm Don Haas, Director of Teacher Programs at the Paleontological Research Institution in Ithaca, New York. http://priweb.org/
We have two public venues, the Museum of the Earth and the Cayuga Nature Center. Both venues have exhibits on climate and energy. At the Nature Center, the Climate Room focuses on the effects of climate change in the Central New York. The exhibit at the Museum of the Earth dates to the opening of the museum and we are currently designing an overhaul of that exhibit.

I've read through all of the discussion so far and am very appreciative of it. Many thanks for making this happen and connecting us all!

The new exhibit will fit into the story that the museum is designed to tell - the interplay of the history of life and the history of the Earth. As visitors walk through the museum, they walk through Earth history, initially by walking back in time past a mural of hundreds of ceramic tiles, each depicting fossils representative of a million years of time. At the bottom of the ramp that takes them past the last 542 million years of Earth history, they then walk forward through time to the present. The new climate and energy exhibit will be the end of their journey through time. There's a bit of a challenge in that they walk through a loop, so it's also the first thing they come to at the bottom of the ramp.

A piece of the exhibit that I'm working on is paying special attention to fire. Fire was very rare, we think, in the first 90% (4 billion years) of Earth history. Essentially all fuel was under water until the Devonian Period began a little over 400 million years ago. It is fire - mostly through the burning of fossil fuels - that is at the root of the climate change we are worried about today.

Fire is also central to what makes us human. Humans are the only species with dominion over fire and controlling fire has made modern society possible. Chances are good that everything you can see right now is there in some meaningful way because of fossil fuels. They are practically magical. But fossil fuels also endanger modern society.

Understanding fire in the context of Earth history and climate history also addresses the common denialist line of reasoning that climate has changed throughout Earth history. That's true, but climate has been remarkably stable during the last 12,000 or so years. That climate stability allowed agriculture and civilization to emerge and thrive. That stability is now, essentially, gone.

The reason that the stability of the last 12,000 years is going away is that we've taken the products of hundreds of millions of years of photosynthesis - what has become fossil fuels - and reversed the process of photosynthesis by burning that fuel, that fossilized photosynthesis. Burning releases the carbon trapped by the processes of photosynthesis and burial and releases it all at once. It's all at once from the perspective of geologic time, anyway. It's roughly 250 years since the start of the Industrial Revolution. Photosynthesis has been removing carbon from the atmosphere for billions of years. (edited)

> priweb.org
> **Home**
> The website of the Paleontological Research Institution and its public venues, the Museum of the Earth and the Cayuga Nature Center.

Sarah Sutton 3:30 AM

Aloha Don. I see you have a climate change education manager. How long have you had that position.

Don Haas 3:31 AM

Hi Sarah, We've had the position for about five years. Ingrid's currently on vacation, or she'd be joining in the conversation.

Don Haas 3:38 AM

I'd also like to point out one of our books, The Teacher-Friendly Guide to Climate Change. It's a resource that's friendly to more than just teachers. It gives a good basic overview of both the physical science of climate change and the social science that makes it a more complicated topic to learn and teach than the rock cycle (for example). The pdf of the book is also free and we have a crowdfunding campaign with the goal of getting the book to every high school in the US. So far, we've shipped to every public school in twelve states. You can find the book and the free pdf here: priweb.org/tfgcc and the crowdfunding campaign is here: bitly.com/TeachClimateScience (if you want to help me out in our internal competition, my fundraising page is here: bitly.com/DonsGG 🙂) (edited)

Caitlin Southwick 3:57 AM

Hello everyone! Wow! First off, @Jenny Newell thank you for putting this together- this is incredible! How inspiring! I am Caitlin Southwick, a stone conservator based in Amsterdam. I am currently a visiting scientist at the Getty Conservation Institute and will head to Rome in April to work on a research project at the Vatican Museums involving a sustainable treatment for removing biological contamination from stone. My interest in sustainability in cultural heritage began at the conservation level when I saw how much waste we produce as conservators, and realized that we are the responsible party for the strict climate control enforced in museums. 3 years ago I started an organization to try to incorporate more sustainable practices into conservation called Sustainability in Conservation https://www.sustainabilityinconservation.com/. In October, I will head back to Amsterdam to run SiC full time (sorry stones!). In addition to SiC, I am also the secretary for the ICOM Working Group on Sustainability (working there with @Jenny Newell and @Henry McGhie) and a professional member of the AIC Sustainability Committee. I am thrilled to be included in this incredible group, and while I don't have personal experience with the curatorial side of exhibitions, it is my hope that in 5 years every museum in the world will have an exhibition on sustainability. This is the perfect place to start to see how to make that successful!

> sustainabilityinconservation.com
> siconserve (27 kB) ▾
>
> SiC
> SUSTAINABILITY IN CONSERVATION

Christine Castle 4:19 AM

Hi all! I seem to be a little late to the party - so I will have to work extra hard to catch up! First let me add my thanks to @Jenny Newell for getting this up and running! And to so many other fabulous folks who have joined in. I am Christine Castle, a retired museum learning consultant living just outside Toronto, Canada. I have been personally interested in sustainability since the 1970s and professionally in issues of museums and social justice for quite some time. My passion for museums and climate justice peaked when Bob Janes invited me in 2017 to join the Advisory Group for the Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice https://coalitionofmuseumsforclimatejustice.wordpress.com/. Since then I have worked with our small group of 6 to "mobilize and support Canadian museum workers and their organizations in building public awareness, mitigation and resilience in the face of climate change." (edited)

> Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice
> **Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice**
> Building museums' capacity to promote awareness, mitigation & resilience in the face of climate change

In terms of what makes an effective climate exhibit, the Coalition has been promoting the sharing of stories and case studies https://coalitionofmuseumsforclimatejustice.wordpress.com/climate-action-stories-case-studies/ in which we hope to encourage museum workers themselves will share what works/what doesn't with one another.

Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice | mchriscastle

Climate Action Stories & Case Studies

We're just getting started here. We're hoping to build a library of stories and case studies but we need your help!

Greening Museums

Meeting the LEED Gold Standard – Markham Museum Collections Building [Case Study] (Published June 14/17) – Guest Post by Cathy Molloy, Director, Markham Museum, Ontario

Australia's Green Museum Project: A pathway towards sustainability for Victorian small museums [Case Study] (Published August 23/17) Guest Post by Simone Ewenson, Green Museum Project Manager, Museums Australia (Victoria)

Informing & Mobilizing the Public

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As you might guess, blog posts aren't always the most effective way to encourage critical analysis. That said, the most recent post from Sara Poirier on "Museums cultivating hope in an era of increasing climate change" provoked some good discussion about how the institutions she contacted evaluated their success https://coalitionofmuseumsforclimatejustice.wordpress.com/2019/01/30/cultivating-hope-in-an-era-of-increasing-climate-change/

Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice | mchriscastle

Museums cultivating hope in an era of increasing climate change

Today's Guest Post is by Sara Poirier, founder of Spark Strategic Science Communication & Public Engagement. Sara has 18 years of experience developing exhibits, educational programs and writing for publications like Yale Climate Connections.

Innovative museums across the US and Canada are creating exciting programs to change the conversation around climate change from one of doom and gloom to one of hope about the future. At the Smithsonian's Earth Optimism Summit 2017, 240 speakers shared their success stories and proposals for solving important conservation and sustainability issues. Online streaming brought in thousands of virtual attendees from around the world. Youth-cen… Show more

Christine Castle 4:35 AM

The other post that might be of interest to this group is Shiralee Hudson Hill's "Into the Anthropocene: AGO's Podcast Series Dives into the Complexities of Climate Change" in which she talks about ways to enhance the effectiveness of the exhibit itself - above and beyond the visit https://coalitionofmuseumsforclimatejustice.wordpress.com/2018/11/14/into-the-anthropocene-agos-podcast-series-dives-into-the-complexities-of-climate-change/

Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice | mchriscastle

Into the Anthropocene: AGO's Podcast Series Dives into the Complexities of Climate Change

Today's Guest Post is by Shiralee Hudson Hill, Lead Interpretive Planner at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

Edward Burtynsky. Carrara Marble Quarries, Cava di Canalgrande #2, Carrara, Italy, 2016. Mural, 304.8 × 609.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto. © 2018 Edward Burtynsky.Scientists around the world are debating that we have entered a new geological epoch – Anthropocene – one defined by human impact on the Earth. This fall the Art Gallery of Ontario and National Gallery of Canada are hosting simultaneous exhibitions, both entitled Anthropocene, that reveal the enormity of human changes on the planet. Featuring…

Show more

Sarah Sutton 6:02 AM

These are valuable resources. More of the crowd going wild heard in the background.....😀

😀 1

Douglas Worts 6:21 AM

I just got back to my desk and will make my way through the material that has been added in the past few hours. I did want to share the following thoughts that I penned earlier today.

6:22 AM Part a: Stratified Framework for Impact Assessment

When museums strive to have meaningful societal impacts related to issues and trends that are shaping the zeitgeist, it can be very useful to develop a framework for impact assessment. Since the issues that define our time are rooted in the complex interactions of human-made and natural systems, it is seems important that the impact assessment framework be stratified. This simply means that if a museum is trying to have impacts, it attempts to plan for impacts at various levels. One possible manifestation of such a stratified system is to plan for impacts within some or all of the following impact categories:

- Individuals
- Groups
- Communities
- Organizations
- Cities
- Regions
- Nations
- The planet.

When approaching a local issue, it is possible to narrow the focus considerably, however it is still important to identify all the relevant stakeholders and map them to show how they fit into the trends within the selected issue.

Museums have historically focused on individuals, largely because their own traditions revolve around their collections, exhibits and buildings – and they have almost exclusively set their context for engagement as the leisure-time economy. These traditions do have their strengths, within certain contexts. But as museums increasingly see themselves as catalysts of cultural adaptation, based on an engaged public, the traditional tools of exhibits and visitation during leisure time becomes a extreme bottleneck that limits the ability to engage the living culture.

Part b. Stratified Impacts - continued (edited)

Museum educators have long understood that engaging individuals requires the building of relationships in which the unique motivations, experiences and skills of 'learners' are supported and nurtured in a host of ways. The goal is one of stimulating the intrinsic motivation of visitors to engage with objects, issues, ideas, history and their own capacity for creativity. To this end, educators develop skills and engaging with people in ways that build trust and rapport, and which utilize the cognitive, affective and kinetic inclinations of the learners. At times this process will encourage personal reflection, dialogue, curiosity, investigation, and even creative action. There is a lot going on here!

With a wicked problem like Climate Change, where the drivers are rooted in the spectrum of individual/local/global realities of interdependent systems, it is hard to imagine how traditional museum approaches to public engagement will lead very far towards systemic impacts. It requires venturing into the cyclical processes of experimentation, assessment, modification, re-assessment, etc. Such an approach depends on building relationships – which is the foundation of this thing we call culture.

Part of what the potential of museums to enter into this space in significant ways is the deep knowledge that museums have of the past. What makes this knowledge especially vital from my perspective is the potential to extract insights from the past and to inject them into the issues of the present. Since humanity does not endlessly repeat the past (although this can be a problem), it needs to bring to bear its capacity for generating new insights, vision and possibilities. This is not necessarily an area that museums have a lot of experience with – so it will take some internal development to generate these skills and to do so with the public.

Within the museum traditions, particularly for museum educators, much skill has been developed about how best to support the dynamics of families. This is an aspect of the 'group' impact category. Many people in this discussion can likely shed fascinating light on these dynamics.

And as we proceed down the list of impact categories, museums have less and less experience. So, if a museums aims to engage a community in a process of reflection, dialogue and creative action, then it needs to develop effective relationships with the constituents that make up the community system.

When museums decide that they want to bring both a critical and creative light to generate impacts at the level of organizations – which is reflected, as an example, within the current forces to have museums exert pressure for change on the fossil fuel industry – there are many questions about how to do this. Given that organizations exist with far-flung value chains attached to them, both upstream suppliers and downstream users, shifting trends is challenging, but not impossible. It requires figuring out where the leverage points are within the larger systems dynamic. Such leverage points are the places at which innovation can create cascading change across the system.

I think you see where I am going with all this. I have written about using sustainability planning tools to help museums extend their reach into territories of expanded relevancy and impact, and am happy to share.

Jenny Newell 6:26 AM

Wow is right @Caitlin Southwick - what significant, exciting conversations we've all started! There is so much to be said in response to each of you - and much valuable food for thought. The 20th is still unfolding for those of you on the other side of the world, and beyond it we can keep this space open, and perhaps we can start up additional channels for some of the key threads to be explored in more depth... Thanks for the introductions to yourselves and your work, for the ideas, important questions, foundational concepts, wonderful resources, and photos - very pleased to be able to see @Nicole Heller's Anthropocene Living Room instead of just imagining it (it's fab, Nicole!), feel I've had a little visit to Lena and @Sofie Öberg Magnusson's Human = Nature exhibition, and have a growing library of crucial resources and writings to now dive into. Thanks all! The conversation continues...😀

Lisa Goulet 7:36 AM

👋 Hi all! I'm working on climate change exhibitions with the Climate Museum in New York City. I have a background in early modern to contemporary Western art history and museum studies and am a Curatorial Fellow at the Museum. We are a fairly new organization which grew into exhibition programming in late 2017; as the entire museum is dedicated to mobilizing collective efforts to combat climate change, everything we do concerns the climate crisis we are currently experiencing.

I'm so thrilled to be included in this forum and excited to read about the other activities happening at your institutions! We are currently in the process of putting together our 2019 season: a youth spoken word competition and an exhibition focused on exploring the network of solutions to attain a decarbonized society.

The case study I would love to share as an example of effective exhibitions is our last project: Climate Signals (climate-signals.org). The exhibition featured the work of contemporary artist Justin Brice Guariglia and consisted of a series of ten LED highway traffic signs placed in uncanny public spaces around NYC, green parks and waterfront boardwalks, for example. Instead of forewarning viewers about traffic conditions, they warned visitors about current or future climate injustices ('50000000 CLIMATE REFUGEES') or called the viewer to action ('VOTE ECO LOGICALLY').

7:36 AM The signs themselves were powerful pieces, which is explained beautifully in a recent article by a writer who stumbled upon one in her neighborhood, linked here: https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/02/01/climate-signs/. Further, part of the benefit of staging this exhibition through the city and not in a gallery space was that we could reach a more diverse audience and partner with local organizations who are already doing amazing work on different climate initiatives around the city for our programming activities. One of the most gratifying programs was called 'Ask A Scientist Day,' where our partners at Columbia University helped us station scientists and other experts at each site so visitors could talk to them about climate change. This event brought the experts into conversation with the greater public in a way that was not intimidating and brought a human face to discussing climate change.

> The New York Review of Books
>
> **Climate Signs**
>
> At two degrees, our best-case climate scenario, melting ice sheets will still pass a point of no return, flooding NYC and dozens of other world cities. In fact, we're on track for over four degrees of warming and an unfathomable scale of suffering by century's end. For my part, I'm only beginning to see that the question of how to prepare our kids for the horrors to come is collateral to the problem of how to deal as adults with the damage we've stewarded them into. What helped me see this was a road sign—one of those LED billboards you normally spot on a highway alerting drivers to a hazard. Oddly, the sign was standing on the grass of a public park. How did that get there, I wondered. (536 kB) ▾

👍 3

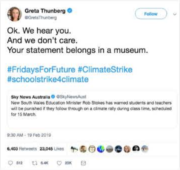
Douglas Worts 8:28 AM

Thanks for making this event happen Jenny Newell. It is amazing to see how current technologies can create links that were impossible a decade ago. It is lovely to learn more about what the Australian Museum is doing these days. It has always been a progressive place. I still stay in touch with Des Griffin, and also Lynda Kelly. Now I know someone new there - thanks! (edited)

Douglas Worts 9:15 AM

Many of you will be very familiar with the 16 year old Swedish woman, Greta Thunberg, who rocked the COP 24 meeting recently, and continues to shake the world of politicians and businesses alike. She has also inspired a lot of people to act. Her call for young students to go on "strike" to protest inaction on climate change has rippled around the world. In a tweet she posted today, she mentioned "museums". Part of the challenge of museums is to tackle the attitudes that much of the general public has towards museums - especially the association with dusty collections of old and not-very-useful things. Specifically, she is commenting on the response of a Education Minister in Australia who is reacting to students protesting on climate change inaction. Greta says that his comment 'belongs in a museum'.

Greta Thunberg - tweet on museums.jpg ▾



Greta Thunberg @GretaThunberg

Follow

Ok. We hear you.
And we don't care.
Your statement belongs in a museum.

#FridaysForFuture #ClimateStrike
#schoolstrike4climate

Sky News Australia @SkyNewsAust
New South Wales Education Minister Rob Stokes has warned students and teachers will be punished if they follow through on a climate rally during class time, scheduled for 15 March.

9:30 AM - 19 Feb 2019

6,403 Retweets 23,045 Likes

512 6.4K 23K

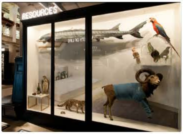
Georgina McDowall 10:22 AM

Hi All! Joining the conversation pretty late from Amsterdam. Lots here to catch up on, but wonderful and enriching ideas...and a huge privilege for someone in my position to be privy to, so thank you Jenny for organising, and for the invitation to be involved.

I am Georgina McDowall, a postgraduate student at the University of Amsterdam, currently in the final stages of my thesis for my MA in Museum Studies, which is on the role of museums in tackling climate change. The theme of this thread is especially timely for my research as my project is structured around three case studies: one effective exhibition, one less so effective, and the Museums and Climate Change Network itself. So, I figured I would briefly share some of my evaluations of the two exhibitions with you.

My effective exhibition is one that you will probably all know well – especially if you are Henry McGhie – so I will not go too far to into explaining it... "Living Worlds" at Manchester Museum, UK is an exhibition which strives to connect the human and the natural worlds. Although it does this through a range of different techniques, which align with the suggestions which Henry has posted above, I would like to draw attention to a couple of aspects which I personally found to be really effective. Firstly, the exhibition contains some really striking interventions that make the connection between visitors' daily lives and nature palpable. For example, the Mouflon (sheep) visible in this picture wearing a wool jumper is at once surprising and obvious, but ultimately makes human use of natural resources instantly relatable.

Screen Shot 2019-02-20 at 23.40.27.png ▾



Second, I would like to highlight the "Living Worlds App," which is the digital version of the gallery, available here: http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/visit/galleries/livingworlds/app/#/home
Not only is the app an incredibly useful resource for those of us who are interested around the world, but it is an excellent tool for extending visitor experience beyond the museums walls, and "toolkit" for climate action. For example, links to resources such as "100 ways to save the planet" as well as local organisations and campaigns provide audiences with ways in which they can get involved on their own terms.

So, I guess the bottom line here is that "Living Worlds" creates opportunities for relatable and accessible public engagement in climate related issues.

My less effective exhibition is "Electricity: The Spark of Life" at Science and Industry Museum, also in Manchester, UK. My main issue here is that the exhibition's fossil fuel sponsorship hinders its ability to effectively address what is clearly a climate related subject – energy. I can see that the subject of fossil fuels and museums has been touched upon above, but I want to emphasise how important I believe divesting from fossil fuels to be as part of museums' role in tackling climate change.

As an example, the exhibition includes what could have been a very effective installation, but one which unfortunately comes across a little muzzled. "Flow" is a piece created by data visualisation company Tekja, and is a really nice example of the potential for art to communicate abstract and/or overwhelming concepts and information – hence how it can be used in communicating climate change, which compliments Hilary Jennings' point about awe – however it ends on a weak note by only implying that our behaviours of consumption "might" be having an impact on the environment. More on "Flow" available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snarOj0srrl

In sum, my evaluations here are that not only do museums need to be practicing what they preach when it comes to museum messages verses practices, but they need to be taking a stance on fossil fuels.

Once again, thanks for having me, I look forward to much more of this type of collaboration!

YouTube | Science and Industry Museum

Behind the scenes: Tekja's Flow

Steph Hachey 10:24 AM

Hello everyone! I apologize, I am a bit late to the conversation it has been a fairly busy day. I am originally from Canada and am currently working on an MSc in Museum Studies at the University of Glasgow. I plan on returning to Canada this summer to work on my dissertation.

I was able to check out the "Anthropocene" exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto over the holidays and was very impressed. I really enjoyed the interactive elements throughout the gallery space. I think it is so important for exhibitions to relate these complex issues back to daily-life and local experiences. I think this interactive map (which was presented at the end of the exhibition) did a great job at accomplishing this.

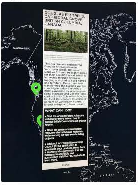
0-1.jpg

HOW DO THESE WORKS CONNECT TO OUR DAILY LIVES? EXPLORE HERE
TAP TO ACTIVATE

2 replies Last reply 3 days ago

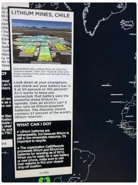
Steph Hachey 10:24 AM

0-2.jpg


DOUGLAS FIR TREES, CATHEDRAL GROVE, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
This is a rare and endangered Douglas fir ecosystem on Vancouver Island. Old-growth Douglas fir trees are highly prized for their beautiful wood, which is harvested through extensive logging and used to build homes and furniture. These trees even transformed the building you are standing in today. The AGO's 2008 expansion included a grand spiral staircase and Galleria Italia clad in British Columbian Douglas fir. As of this century, less than 10 percent of Vancouver Island's largest old-growth trees remain.
WHAT CAN I DO?
• Visit the Ancient Forest Alliance's website for more info on how to protect British Columbia's old-growth forests.
• Seek out green and renewable resource alternatives as materials while working on your own building projects.
• Look out for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification to guarantee your products come from a source and supply chain that are managed responsibly and sustainably. Visit the FSC website to learn more.
CLOSE
ALASKA (USA)
BRAZIL
PERU

Thursday, February 21st

0-3.jpg


LITHIUM MINES, CHILE
Look down at your smartphone and check out your battery bar: is it at 50 percent or 100 percent? As it works to keep you connected, that battery uses the powerful metal lithium to operate. Own an electric car? It also runs on lithium-powered batteries. The Atacama Desert contains 27 percent of the world's lithium reserves.
WHAT CAN I DO?
• Lithium batteries are rechargeable, but because lithium is still a non-renewable resource, it's important to recycle.
• The organization Call2Recycle processes lithium and lithium-ion batteries for recycling as of 2012. When you're ready for a new battery or new phone, make sure to visit their website to find your closest drop-off location.
CLOSE
ICELAND

Friday, February 22nd

Jenny Newell 12:03 AM

Thanks for the ongoing, rich and wonderful contributions, all! A few others will be linking into the forum now, as word has got out (and as I realise I missed sending a link when asked! Sorry Henry Evans!!). So, more good food for thought to come...

👍 1

Christine Castle 3:48 AM

replied to a thread: Hello everyone! I apologize, I am a bit late to the conversation it has been a fairly busy day. I am originally from Canada and am currently working on an MSc in Museum Studies at the University of Glasgow. I plan on return...

Thanks, Steph. You might also be interested in this review of Anthropocene by 2 Museum Studies students at U of Toronto https://coalitionofmuseumsforclimatejustice.wordpress.com/2018/10/24/questioning-the-we-interpretation-and-narrative-in-anthropocene/

Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice | mchriscastle

Questioning the "We": Interpretation and Narrative in Anthropocene

ANTHROPOCENE

Today's Guest Post is by Camille-Mary Sharp, a third-year Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, and Lana Tran, a second year Master of Museum Studies student at the University of Toronto.

Anthropocene is an art exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto) that features the photographs, film installations, and augmented reality installations of Edward Burtynsky, Jennifer Baichwal, and Nicholas de Pencier. The exhibit seeks to showcase human impact on our planet. In the following dialogue, Lana and Camille discuss their first impressions and take-aways.

Photo courtesy of the authors.

Camille: From the start of the exhibition, what stood out th...

Show more

Henry 8:09 PM

Hi everyone and a pleasure to meet you all. My name is Henry James Evans and I'm a science communicator with a background in marine biology and climate change. In April I'll be starting a PhD at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, which will focus on the topics of sustainability and climate change within 'science museums': including museums, science centres, aquariums and zoo's. This important question of "what makes an effective climate change exhibition" is very valid to my research project and I look forward to working with you all in the future. I'll now spend time catching up on the interesting discussions above. Cheerio!

Yesterday

Christine Castle 8:34 AM

👍

Jenny Newell 10:45 PM

Hi everyone -it's been invigorating having us brought together like this and having so many important ideas and useful perspectives. I think a lot of us have more we'd like to continue to explore together ...Next steps? Maybe it'd be useful to set up channels on some of the threads, to create an ongoing space for discussion? We could set up a few more specific dates so it provides a concentrated focus for people?

Thoughts welcome on what would be most useful for you and your particular needs...

I'll send an email out to the group so I can make sure I'm capturing everyone (as some of us will have turned Slack notifications off). (edited)