Earth Day at 50: Sustainable Exhibition Planning During a Time of Pandemic

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Earth Day at 50: Sustainable Exhibition Planning in a Time of Pandemic

Dr. Michael A. Di Giovine
Director, Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology

Natalie Fenner, Tyler C. Haney, Foster W. Krupp, Ben Popp, Melina Schauermann
Exhibition Co-Curators
Seminar Agenda

- Introduction to MST 358 and Exhibit Design Process - Dr. Michael A. Di Giovine, Museum Director
- Exhibit Description and Student Planning - Benjamin A. Popp, Co-Curator
- Dioramas and *Silent Spring* - Foster W. Krupp, Co-Curator
- History of Earth Day - Tyler Haney, Co-Curator
- Illegal Wildlife Trade - Foster W. Krupp
- Climate Change and Ecological Footprint, Melina Schauerman, Co-Curator
- West Chester University and the Environmental Movement, Natalie Fenner, Co-Curator
- Post Covid-19 Plans and Modifications, Dr. Michael A. Di Giovine
- Closing Remarks
WCU Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology

www.wcupa.edu/museum
WCU MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Collections:
- Northeastern Woodlands
  - Tens of thousands of artifacts
  - Some 5000 years old
- Edmundo Morales Collection of Andean Hats
  - 50 hats and headdresses
- US-Mexico Borderlands
  - Approx. 500 artifacts from Sonoran desert and growing
  - Artwork with found objects
  - Students doing research there after curating
- Rwanda
  - 250 artifacts and growing
  - WCU Shinehouse Gishwati Field Station

www.wcupa.edu/museum
Past Exhibits

2007  The Lenape Gamwing Ceremony: A Window into the Delaware Big House Rite
2008  History Recycled: The Journey of the Blue Ball (Tavern)
2009  Archaeology of Early Quakers in Southeastern Pennsylvania: The Robert Pyle Site
2010  Indigenous Andean Hats and Headdresses: The Edmundo Morales Collection
2011  Material Culture of the American Indian: The Carlton Thomas Collection
2012  Bridging Asia: Trade and Culture in the Indian Ocean
2014  Enculturation: Learning Our Cultural Identity as Children
2016  Feasting and Foodways: Creating Community through Time in the Southeastern Delaware Valley
2017  The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America
2018  Rwanda Nziza: Beautiful Rwanda
2019  Faces of the Berlin Wall: Divided Lives and Legacies 30 Years After the Fall
2020  Earth Day at 50: Lessons for a Sustainable Future
Engagement

noun en·gage·ment \in-ˈgāj-mənt\ emotional involvement or commitment

Student Engagement

The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education.
High Impact Educational Practices (George Kuh, 2008)

- Deep approaches to learning that engage students holistically
  - Includes both acquiring information and understanding underlying contexts
- Shown to have higher outcomes
  - Making connections between material and real life
  - Self reflexivity

More than anything else, being an educated person means being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways. Every one of the qualities I have described here—listening, reading, talking, writing, puzzle solving, truth seeking, seeing through other people’s eyes, leading, working in a community—is finally about connecting.

High Impact Educational Practices (George Kuh, 2008)

- Components of high-impact educational practices
  - Demand students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks
  - Substantive interaction with faculty and student peers
  - Students experience diversity; get out of their comfort zone
  - Frequent constructive feedback by faculty and peers
  - Connect what they are learning outside of the classroom, in different environments (especially the community)
  - Be included in faculty research
    - Helps to understand the craft of research and humanizes the instructor
Process

- Devotes substantive time and effort
- Substantial interaction with peers and faculty
- Builds in feedback by peers and faculty
- Involves faculty in research
- “Touching” alterity
Process: Planning

Planning:
- Briefing by professors on vision
- Roundtable discussions on students’ vision
- Workshopping “Big idea”
- Small group work / research by theme
- Meetings with relevant faculty (briefings, feedback)

Design:

Evaluation:

Presentation:

Students and members of WCU Sustainability Council meet in Jan.
Process: Design

- Logo
- “Big idea” for each case
- Acquisition of artifacts
- Collections management
- Design
- Construction of interactives
- Workshopping labels
The Exhibit

- **Message**
  - Big idea and title deliberations
- **How do we convey this message?**
  - Discovery learning
  - Categorization and individual exhibits
  - Accessibility
- **Physical design**
  - What will the exhibit look like?
Big Idea

“The fiftieth anniversary of Earth day is an empowering reminder that positive actions in daily life can combat the ongoing environmental crisis that humans have created.”
Discovery learning model

The Constructivist Museum - George E. Hein
Strangers: This attitude arises when the museum maintains that its primary responsibility is to the *collection* and not to the public.

Guests: From this point of view, the museum wants to “do good” for visitors primarily through “educational” activities.

Clients: In this attitude the museum believes that its primary responsibility is to be *accountable* to the visitor. This article suggests that social trends will force museums to treat visitors as clients. Institutions will then acknowledge that visitors have needs, expectations, and wants that the museum is obligated to understand and meet.
Accessibility

Creating a multi-faceted visitor experience that is accessible to learners of all ages.

Falk et al., *Interactives and Visitor Learning*
Caulton, *The Educational Context*
Earth Day at 50 exhibit description

How do we meet our desired outcomes?

Exhibition surrounds a large Tree of Life, completely constructed out of reclaimed and reused materials by Tom Haughey and students at the theater practicum class.
Tree of Life
Exhibits

- Suburban sprawl and *Silent Spring*
- History timeline and modern activism
- Loss of biodiversity and illegal wildlife trade
- The modern climate crisis
  - Plastic waste
  - Sea level rise and salt marsh destruction
  - Energy use and carbon footprint
- West Chester University
Dioramas

Exhibition begins with a series of dioramas featuring taxidermied specimens from the Delaware Museum of Natural History. They present suburban sprawl and the Silent Spring—prime drivers of the first Earth Day.
50 Years of Earth Day: Origins and Impact of the Movement

A timeline presenting key events in the last 50 years of Earth Day is juxtaposed with enormous graphs presenting the negative changes to the environment in the same time period.
History and Activism - Our First Artifact!
Our Earth Day Timeline

- Historical Data
- *Silent Spring*, Cuyahoga River, Oil Spills
- Gaylord Nelson
- Student/Youth Activism
- Clean Air Act, EPA, Endangered Species
- Indigenous Activism
Poaching and the Illegal Wildlife Trade
We plan to highlight the theme of this year’s Earth Day which is “Climate Action.”

The exhibit will demonstrate what the ecological footprint is and what the major factors are that contribute to it as well as the different actions that can be and are being taken to reduce a person’s ecological footprint.

The relationship between an ecological footprint and a carbon footprint.
Interactives and Partners

- The West Chester Green Team is sharing a stationary bike with us which will show how much power is needed for differing lightbulbs.

- Looking into working with a local solar panel company to display a solar panel.

- Plastic Pollution exhibit which will focus on the build up of plastics in landfills and in the ocean, one aspect of the exhibit will follow the lifespan of three plastic bottles that were disposed of in different ways.
Ecological Footprint

- An Ecological Footprint calculator will be used, and we are working on getting a computer program to combine the visitor’s results together.
- This kind of calculator analyzes the person’s ecological footprint as well as their carbon footprint in a set of simple yet detailed questions.

https://www.footprintcalculator.org
Utilizing Ecological Footprint Results

The results are broken down into separate sections to show what contributes to a person’s ecological footprint the most and explains what a person can do to change their footprint.

We can use these results to see what the main contributors to most people’s footprints are and see how a person’s footprint can be reduced.
Pandemic Modifications

- Depend on electronic forms of communication to continue the planning of our exhibit
- We are continuing research and writing our section of the catalog
- Utilizing this extra time to contact local solar panel companies
Homegrown Efforts: 50 Years of Earth Day at WCU

- **The Research**
  - The Gordon, Geothermal Energy, Climate Action Plan/ How to Make Change on Campus

- **The Process**
  - Working from home
  - On our own research

- **What’s next?**
  - Catalog and setting up!
Homegrown Efforts: 50 Years of Earth Day at WCU
Crafting an Exhibit Catalog

- Exhibit Groups and Proposals
- Research and Artifacts
- Developing the Exhibition Through Writing
Plans post-COVID-19: Modifications
Plans post-COVID-19: Evaluation

- Professor evaluation throughout process
  - Big idea
  - Labels
  - Design process
- Front-end evaluation with peers
- Adjust design
- Evaluation with outside peers

- Publication of peer-reviewed catalog
- Website content / virtual exhibit catalog
  - Graduating students

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**West Chester University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology**

**The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America, 1967-2017**

Exhibit Curated and Catalog Edited by
Michael A. Di Giovine, Ph.D.
Department of Anthropology and Sociology

Old Library Artium Museum
715 South French St., West Chester, PA 19383
April 11, 2017 – December 31, 2017

**Rwandanziza: Beautiful Rwanda**

Exhibit Curated and Catalog Edited by
Michael A. Di Giovine, Ph.D.
Department of Anthropology and Archaeology

West Chester University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology
April 27, 2018 – February 28, 2019

**Faces of the Berlin Wall**

Exhibit Curated and Catalog Edited by
Michael A. Di Giovine, Ph.D.
Director, Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology

West Chester University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology
April 26, 2019 – February 28, 2020

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www.wcupa.edu/museum | museum@wcupa.edu
Exhibition opening: September 25, 2020

- Exhibition opening - Postponed to September 25, 2020
  - Student presentations
  - Inclusion of the community
“intrinsic motivation”

- Self-pride
- Interest / investment in topic
- Productivity
- Tangible outcomes
Guided tours: satisfying our mission of community engagement

Guided tours for the public satisfies our mission of being a “leader in community engagement, enhancing the quality of life for all campus community members”

- PASSHE Anthropology Conference
- First Year Experience (FYE)
- Classes on request
- School groups (5th, 6th, high school)
- Senior groups

Planning for approximately 750-1000 visitors
Press and outreach

- Social media (student-run)
- Press
- Word-of-mouth
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