Increasing U.S. Children and Families' Understanding of Asian Cultures: A Final Report©

Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative

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Increasing U.S. Children and Families' Understanding of Asian Cultures: A Final Report©

Selinda Research Associates, Inc.

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Finally, we thank the many children's museum visitors who participated in this study. Their willingness to interrupt their visits to *Initiative* exhibitions and give so generously of their time is greatly appreciated.

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ABSTRACT

The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative was administered by the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) and funded by The Freeman Foundation (Stowe, Vermont, and New York, New York). The *Initiative* developed seven traveling exhibitions, each depicting an Asian culture (Chinese, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, and Viet Namese). The exhibitions opened at their first venues in early 2004, and each traveled to at least 10 children's museums across the United States over four years.

The *Asian Exhibit Initiative* research study investigated the impact of the *Initiative* on American children's understanding of Asian cultures by examining the learning, interactivity, and audiences observed at *Initiative* exhibitions. The study found that children learned about unfamiliar Asian cultures through a variety of developmentally appropriate interactive engagements and types of play, and with the assistance of their caregivers. Exhibition audiences were much more diverse than the original target audience. Recommendations made to individual museums included the use of planning and evaluation tools such as development frameworks and play/knowledge hierarchies, samples of which are included in the report. Recommendations made to the Association of Children's Museums focused on extending the multi-dimensional benefits of the *Initiative* both to museums planning cultural exhibitions and to the children's museum field at large.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This document summarizes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the seven chapters of *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. The findings and conclusions are summarized in the first section, and the recommendations are synthesized in the second section.

Summary

Introduction. *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative*[1] was a project administered by the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) and funded by a $7 million grant from The Freeman Foundation (Stowe, Vermont, and New York, New York). The *Initiative* developed seven traveling exhibitions, ranging in size from 900 to 1,800 square feet. Each exhibition depicted a single Asian culture, including Chinese, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, and Viet Namese cultures. The exhibitions were developed, designed, and built between 2002 and 2004. After opening at their first venues in early 2004, each traveled to at least 10 children's museums across the United States over the next three-and-a-half years.

As part of the development process, each of the seven exhibitions[2] was evaluated to determine its success. The *Asian Exhibit Initiative* research study described in this report investigated the impact of the *Initiative* on American children's understanding of Asian cultures. Secondary research questions investigated the impact of interactive exhibits on children's understanding of Asian cultures and the impact of the *Initiative* on the children's museum field. Each chapter is a stand-alone document covering a single topic, including recommendations for applying the results to future cultural exhibitions and programs. These recommendations focus on two goals: (a) providing guidance to children's museums developing their own exhibitions and programs about Asian and other cultures, and (b) giving the Association of Children's Museums guidance as it plans for future large-scale initiatives.

Audiences for Cultural Exhibitions in Children's Museums

The primary target audience for the *Initiative* exhibitions was defined as American children, ages 5 to 12. This chapter describes and analyzes the actual audiences for the exhibitions in children's museums around the country, focusing on the type and degree of their connection to the culture depicted in the exhibition. American children who visited Initiative exhibitions were classified into three groups: (a) children with no special interest in or knowledge of the culture; (b) children who had a special interest in the culture portrayed in the exhibition, although this was not their ancestral culture; and (c) children for whom this was their ancestral culture. Parents and other adult caregivers were classified using a similar three-part classification: (a) no special interest in the focus culture, (b) non-ancestral special interest, or (c) the exhibition was about their ancestral culture.

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[1] In this report, *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative* is sometimes referred to as the *Asian Exhibit Initiative, AEI*, or simply the Initiative.

[2] In this report, the term "exhibition" refers to the entire display, and the term "exhibit" to individual components or units of which the exhibition is comprised.

Considering Child Development When Designing Cultural Exhibitions

Age-related development played a critical role in children's experiences of *Initiative* exhibitions. The actual ages of visitors to *Initiative* exhibitions extended well below and well above the target range of 5- to 12-years old; in many host museums, the majority of child visitors were seven-years old or less. The challenge for both producing museums and the research team was finding ways to apply either age categories or traditional developmental stages to children's understanding of culture, given the important role that experience plays in learning about culture.

To facilitate the development of effective exhibitions for children, ACM asked each of the exhibition projects to create a *developmental framework* for their exhibition. Based on the concepts of developmentally appropriate practice, theory, and research on child development, the *Initiative* research team developed a *model developmental framework for cultural exhibitions and programs* that can be used by other children's museums as they plan their own exhibitions and programs about other cultures.

As the research team analyzed observational and interview data from *Initiative* exhibitions, they developed a hierarchical approach to linking children's play within the exhibitions to their understanding of that culture. The resulting *play* and *knowledge hierarchies* described what was happening with children, physically and intellectually, within the completed exhibitions. The generalized hierarchy was designed as a tool for children's museum staff to adapt and use as they investigate what is occurring in their own cultural exhibitions and programs.

Contexts for Engaging Children with Other Cultures

The seven *Initiative* exhibitions focused on five different cultures and on different aspects of those cultures. Despite these differences, there were many features that the seven exhibitions shared. Thus, children visiting the exhibitions were able to interact, play, and learn in similar ways in all seven exhibitions. The research team classified features found in *Initiative* exhibitions into two broad categories: contextual settings and contextual components. *Contextual settings* were immersive physical representations of places, real and imaginary. *Contextual components* were elements included within the contextual setting that were designed to engage children in particular ways, such as a motor scooter, a kite, or a drum. Contextual components suggested play possibilities, but the roles and storyline of the play often were inspired by the contextual setting.

Learning in the Asian Exhibit Initiative Exhibitions

As documented by the summative evaluations and confirmed by Selinda's own field studies, children were learning in all seven Asian Exhibit Initiative exhibitions. Most children who spent time exploring the exhibitions developed or deepened their understanding of an Asian culture in ways appropriate to their age and level of existing knowledge about other cultures. Children showed evidence of many types of learning: children's curiosity was piqued; they made their own factual observations of Asian children portrayed in the exhibitions; they developed their understanding, appreciation, and perceptions of Asian cultures; and they later recalled what they had seen and done in the exhibitions. Specific examples drawn from evaluation and research studies illustrate 10 types of learning common to informal settings like museums as observed in the exhibitions. Examples of children not learning in ways that the exhibition teams had hoped are described to help exhibition planners avoid similar issues with future exhibitions.

Contributors to Children's Learning in Cultural Exhibitions

Three factors that contributed to children's learning about Asian cultures were: (a) the interactive nature of the exhibitions; (b) children's play within the exhibitions, especially fantasy- and role-playing; and (c) parents and other caregivers as facilitators.

In the individual summative reports, evaluators found that children enjoyed opportunities for hands-on interaction within the exhibitions, spent the most time using interactive components, and learned more about the focus culture by using them. The research team found many examples of learning taking place through children's play in *Initiative* exhibitions, especially role-playing inspired by the cultural contexts established within the exhibitions. Summative evaluations emphasized the critical roles that parents and other caregivers played in children's learning.

Effects on Individual Children's Museums

The *Asian Exhibit Initiative* had a broad range of effects on the individual museums involved. These effects are described using a three-part classification, including *outputs* (direct products of project activities), *outcomes* (changes in participants' behavior, knowledge, and skills), and impacts (fundamental changes occurring in organizations, communities, or systems as a result of project activities).

Outputs included: the seven exhibitions, the range of supporting materials that accompanied the exhibitions, marketing efforts and programs planned by the host museums, and the millions of visitors during the four-year tour. Staff learning, about the specific Asian culture and about working with traveling exhibitions, was the major outcome for the host museums. Impacts included: producing museums' increased knowledge about developing cultural exhibitions for children, host museums new or stronger relationships with their local Asian American communities, increased capacity of smaller and newer museums to host traveling exhibitions, and planned development of cultural exhibitions over the coming years.

Effects on the Children's Museum Field

Beyond the level of individual museums, the *Initiative* has affected (a) children's museums and museum staff who did not directly participate in the *Initiative*, (b) the relationships among children's museums, (c) and the Association of Children's Museums. The *Initiative* changed the landscape of traveling exhibitions about culture, both in audience numbers and in expectations for what makes a good children's museum exhibition about culture. ACM and producing museums were discussing plans to continue circulating *Initiative* exhibitions at children's museums and other venues at the conclusion of the current tour. Thus some of the major outputs of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* seem destined to outlive the project that produced them, reaching museums that did not participate in the original project.

Looking at broader outcomes of the *Initiative*, the children's museum field increased its understanding of cultural exhibitions for children through the *Initiative's* research and evaluation efforts. One of the most profound and presumably lasting contributions of the *Initiative* has been the increased, shared knowledge about presenting and displaying Asian cultures – and culture in general – to American children in meaningful ways. Broader and longer term impacts may also include increased diversity of museum audiences. Many host museums reported that *Initiative* exhibitions increased both the cultural and age diversity of their museums' visitors, and they were hoping to consolidate those gains. In addition, the *Initiative* helped make cultural exhibitions a higher priority across the field. Smaller children's museums look to larger and more established museums as sources of ideas and inspiration, and the relationships that

host museums built with their producing museums were an important part of the *Initiative*. Host museums said they were impressed by the capabilities of ACM as demonstrated by the *Initiative*, and it appears that ACM has developed a reputation as an organization that can get things done for children's museums across the country.

Recommendations

This first set of recommendations is specifically for those museums and museum staff members involved in developing cultural exhibitions for children.

Identify and Define Audiences More Broadly

Often museums develop exhibitions for children by targeting a specific age range. While this can be a useful strategy to guide some design and development decisions, it ignores the very diverse nature of the groups who will actually visit. The description of the exhibition's proposed audiences should go beyond age ranges to include levels of interest, prior knowledge, and experience with the culture, and consider age-related intellectual and emotional development.

When possible, exhibition teams should **use developmental frameworks** to plan cultural exhibitions and programs for children. These frameworks can be based on the model framework developed for this report, or on a producing museum's framework, or can be developed from scratch. Exhibitions that are based on developmental frameworks will include goals, activities, experiences, and learning outcomes that are effective for a broad range of ages, interests, and levels of experience with the culture.

Play and knowledge hierarchies should be used to guide planning and evaluation in ways that embrace broad audiences. Observe and talk with young visitors and parents to find out what they are doing and understanding about the cultures portrayed, and use these findings to modify existing exhibits, or to plan new ones.

Develop Community Partnerships

Engaging the community was one of the most satisfying aspects of their *Initiative* experiences for many host museums (detailed in Chapter 6, "Effects on Individual Children's Museums"). Develop a culturally sensitive approach to exhibition development by engaging representatives of the focus culture in exhibit and program planning.

Support Play and Guide Caregivers

Develop exhibits that **support many types of play**. Children should find novel objects and settings to explore; have opportunities to make things, develop skills, and solve problems; be challenged by rule-based games; engage in sensory play; and pretend to take on roles within the culture. Exhibits should seek a balance between familiar and unfamiliar aspects of the culture. An appropriate balance will attract and hold children's attention, support role-playing in familiar settings, and inspire exploration of less familiar objects, settings, and activities.

Exhibit developers should **support caregivers** as they guide their children to discover cultures at appropriate developmental levels. For instance, interpretation should model ways for caregivers to use the name of the country, culture, and people when talking to their children, and provide pronunciation guides throughout.

The following set of recommendations suggests many ways the Association of Children's Museums can extend the *AEI* project both directly and indirectly, by addressing the many lessons learned over the course of the four-year initiative.

Maximize the Many Contributions of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Project

ACM should use its Web site and other means to **assist and publicize the continuing circulation of the *AEI* exhibitions** by serving as a clearing house for contact and tour information.

ACM should **increase the field's access to the range of printed materials** produced during the *Initiative*. ACM should post examples of the producing museums' developmental frameworks, all *AEI* evaluation reports, and educational materials developed by producing museums on the ACM Web site.

ACM should continue to **disseminate the knowledge gained** during the *Initiative*. ACM should develop and support conference presentations, on-line seminars, and publications that share and build on the field's growing knowledge about cultural exhibitions and about children's understanding of Asian cultures beyond this report.

ACM should work with producing and host museums to **develop a list of design and support criteria** that make hosting traveling exhibitions easier. ACM should also **share producing museums' accumulated knowledge** about the *process* of developing and designing cultural exhibitions, including both *InterActivity* sessions (as planned for 2008), and written summaries in a widely available format. Also, ACM should **tap the host museums' knowledge** about building relationships with their Asian American communities. Each host has a story to tell, and these should be gathered and condensed in a way useful to other museums. By sharing this accumulated knowledge, ACM will provide support for children's museums that produce new exhibitions about any cultures.

ACM should develop ways to **help children's museums with an interest in cultural exhibitions build relationships with each other**. Blogs or other electronic forums might prove to be useful for this sort of networking, and should include ideas for programming, publicizing, and staffing the exhibitions, to start.

Finally, ACM should continue to **gather data about the longer-term effects of the *Initiative*** on the children's museum field. For instance, the research team recommends that ACM track the use of (a) developmental frameworks and knowledge hierarchies, and (b) *Initiative* reports and related presentations. Use Web site usage statistics, formal interviews, and informal contacts to track who accesses this information and how they use it over the next five to ten years. Case studies could be published in *Hand to Hand*, and successful examples could be posted on the ACM Web site. Also, to better understand the long-term outcomes and impacts of the *Initiative*, ACM should continue to collect data from AEI host and producing museums by conducting follow-up staff interviews and/or written surveys at several points over the next two to five years.

Future Directions for Cultural Exhibitions

ACM should work with exhibit developers and designers to **develop a "cookbook"** of proven exhibit techniques for engaging children with other cultures. This can be modeled after the *Exploratorium Cookbooks* or the Cheapbooks distributed by the Association of Science and Technology Centers. Each exhibit can be described and illustrated in detail, with advice about design, materials, labeling, procurement, and exhibition management. In addition, the cookbook exhibits can be analyzed using developmental frameworks, play/knowledge hierarchies, and formative and summative evaluations conducted by the *Initiative*.

ACM should extend the work begun during the *Initiative* by **sponsoring the creation of new developmental frameworks**. Developmental frameworks on a range of topics can be created and disseminated as a standard part of ACM-sponsored initiatives and programs. In addition, ACM should work with educators and researchers to **develop model learning goals for the 10 different types of learning** (described in Chapter 4, "Learning in the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Exhibitions"), so that exhibitions can facilitate all types of learning.

ACM should sponsor a new large-scale initiative to **develop new sets of cultural exhibitions** that can be shared by children's museums across the United States. These could include:

- New single-culture exhibitions that explicitly take into account what children are learning at the lower levels of the play/knowledge hierarchies. The audience for these exhibitions could be defined as "children from birth to age 12 [or older], and their families and caregivers."
- Smaller-scale Asian cultural exhibitions that can be installed for several years at host museums. The goal would be for host museums to make long-term commitments to the focus Asian cultures. The ACM-developed exhibitions would serve as the central focus for long-term partnerships with the local Asian communities and for a range of associated programming and in-house exhibits. The smaller size (perhaps 500 square feet) would keep costs manageable and allow even small museums to participate in the project. Costs per exhibition could be minimized by developing multiple copies of each exhibition, to be installed around the country.
- One or more exhibitions that take a multi- or cross-cultural approach to Asian cultures. This would allow the field to learn how to develop effective exhibitions of this type, and could perhaps help visitors learn to differentiate among Asian cultures.

ACM should **support the development of a unified, flexible evaluation process** that asks common research questions across the range of cultural exhibitions so that meaningful comparisons can be made across multiple exhibitions. Researchers could look at data across sites, using a flexible evaluation approach so that the creativity and spontaneity inherent in good evaluations is not lost. Also, **evaluation results should be shared** in future initiatives. As part of the contract with producing museums, ACM should obtain permission to post evaluation reports on the ACM Web site. Finally, any new exhibition initiative should **track long-term changes in children's museum audiences** (by conducting evaluations before, during, and after the exhibition is open to the public). ACM should work with children's museums to track both short-term and long-term changes in the cultural and age diversity of their audiences, especially for exhibitions and programs designed to affect that diversity.

It is also important for the field to **conduct additional research into cultural exhibitions** for children. Not surprisingly, by conducting this research study, the team uncovered many new ideas worthy of exploration, such as:

- Develop a long-term research study tracking how families use, and learn from, cultural exhibitions and programs for children. The goal should be to understand and document how families incorporate cultural exhibitions and programs into their views of other cultures. The study could take place at a children's museum with permanent immersive exhibitions of one or more Asian cultures. Research could track families who began the project with preschool-aged children, and for 5-10+ years. Ideally, respondent families should show a range of relationships to the focus culture (as described in Chapter 1, "Audiences for Cultural Exhibitions in Children's Museums").

- Develop an exhibition that can serve as a research lab, designed for in-depth exploration of the themes developed during *AEI* research.

- Sponsor continuing research of children's learning in cultural exhibitions, such as the relationships between interactivity, children's play, and learning in cultural exhibitions. Also, research ways that children understand the interplay of the past and present in shaping contemporary cultures, both for their own and less familiar cultures. Finally, investigate the role of folktales in children's understanding of other cultures. In particular, applied research could develop effective ways to incorporate such stories into cultural exhibitions for children and compare the outcomes with other approaches.

As part of any research project, ACM should **disseminate project findings** in ways that facilitate their application within the children's museum field.

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Introduction

Background on *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative*

The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative[1] was a project administered by the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) and funded by a $7 million grant from The Freeman Foundation (Stowe, Vermont, and New York, New York). The *Initiative* developed seven traveling exhibitions, ranging in size from 900 to 1,800 square feet. Each exhibition depicted a single Asian culture, including Korean, Viet Namese, Japanese, Hmong, and Chinese cultures. The exhibitions were designed for the *Initiative* target audience, American children ages 5 to 12.

At the beginning of the Initiative, ACM commissioned a survey of American parents' knowledge and attitudes towards Asian cultures (Fleishman-Hillard Knowledge Solutions, 2004). Interviews conducted with almost 600 American parents in January 2004 indicated that most placed importance on their children learning about the people and cultures of other nations. However, relatively few parents closely identified with, or closely followed, an Asian culture. Instead, families tended to emphasize the ethnic/racial culture of the parents, and/or the region of the country in which the parents lived. Few parents interviewed were of Asian descent. Many parents said they knew something about Asian culture (most often food), but few said they knew much about Asian art, music, or literature. Overall, the survey findings suggested that, although the cultures of Asia remain relatively unfamiliar to them, American parents were open to the idea of their children learning more.

Developed partly in response to that survey, the goals of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* were to:

- *raise the level of awareness of Asian cultures by reaching children and families at U.S. children's museums*;
- *significantly increase the number and quality of exhibits in the U.S. that focus on Asian cultures for children*;
- *enhance existing partnerships and relationships between children's museums and Asian cultural organizations or other relevant resources, and;*
- *bring the critical resource of cultural exhibits that are developmentally appropriate for young children to U.S. children's museums.*

The Freeman Foundation and the Association of Children's Museums wanted to assess the impacts of the *Initiative* on American children's understanding of Asian cultures and on the children's museum field in general. Selinda Research Associates, Inc. was selected by ACM to conduct this larger research study.

[1] In this report, *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative* is sometimes referred to as the *Asian Exhibit Initiative, AEI*, or simply the Initiative.

The Seven Exhibitions and the Tour

After a competitive process to select the producing children's museums, the seven exhibitions were developed, designed, and built between 2002 and 2004. The exhibitions and their producing museums are listed in Table I-1, below, and are described in greater detail in Appendix A: Descriptions of the Exhibitions.

Each of the seven exhibitions[2] was evaluated, including front-end evaluations early in the development process, formative evaluations of prototype components, and remedial and/or summative evaluations once the exhibitions were installed in their first venues. These evaluations were completed by external evaluators selected by the museums that produced the exhibitions. The evaluation reports are listed in Appendix A.

Table I-1:
The seven *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions and their producing museums.

Monkey King: A Journey to China, produced by Children's Museum of Manhattan.
Hmong at Heart, produced by Madison Children's Museum.
Song of Korea, produced by Austin Children's Museum and developed in close collaboration with Samsung Children's Museum in Seoul, Korea.
Dragons and Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales, produced by The Children's Museum of Houston.
Five Friends from Japan: Children in Japan Today, produced by Boston Children's Museum and National Children's Museum, Washington, DC (previously called the Capital Children's Museum).
J***apan and Nature: Spirit of the Seasons***, produced by Brooklyn Children's Museum.
Jump to Japan: Discovering Culture through Popular Art, produced by Minnesota Children's Museum, St. Paul, and The Children's Museum, Seattle.

All seven exhibitions opened at their first venues in early 2004, and then each traveled to at least 10 host children's museums across the United States over the next three-and-a-half years. In addition to receiving the exhibition for free, each host museum received a $15,000 re-grant from ACM to help cover additional expenses, including local publicity. The host museums ranged geographically from Maine to Hawaii and from Minnesota to Florida. The exhibitions travelled to some of the largest children's museums in the world, and they also visited many medium-sized and small museums. The largest host museums served more than 500,000 visitors per year, the smallest only about 10,000 per year. By the time the tour ended, the seven exhibitions had been seen by about 3.4 million visitors at host museums. The host museums are listed in Appendix A.

[2] In this report, the term "exhibition" refers to the entire display, and the term "exhibit" to the individual components or units of which the exhibition is comprised..

The Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Study

While evaluations determined the success of individual exhibitions, the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* research study investigated larger issues pertinent to the children's museum field as a whole. This study had three major research questions. The primary research question was:

> *What was the impact of the seven Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative traveling exhibitions on American children's understanding of Asian cultures?*

The two secondary research questions were:

> *What was the impact of interactive exhibits on children's awareness and understanding of different cultures?*

> *What was the impact of the Asian Exhibit Initiative on the children's museum field?*

For details of the methodology, methods, and study design, please see Appendix B: Description of the Research Study.

Approach to this Report

Early in this study, the team found that the children's museum field as a whole had not benefited from earlier analyses of child-centered exhibitions about Asian cultures. Most of the lessons learned from these exhibitions were based on informal observations and discussions with visitors rather than written evaluation studies, and these results were usually shared only within the producing institutions.[3] Therefore, the research team resolved to disseminate the findings from this study to the people who could most benefit from them. The team decided that the primary audience should include children's museum professionals who develop and administer exhibitions and programs about other cultures. Also, secondary audiences might include a range of other professionals and volunteers who develop programs and exhibits about Asia for institutions other than children's museums. The team recognized that reaching the primary audience would require more than a few conference presentations or articles in a newsletter, although ACM's annual *InterActivity* conference was still a logical starting point.

Therefore, at an *InterActivity 2006* session in Boston, the research team invited ACM members to suggest which topics related to *Initiative* research would be most interesting and useful to them, and what dissemination methods would be most effective. Discussion with the 50 session participants focused on three questions:

> *What kinds of information would be most useful to the professionals who develop, design, and build cultural exhibits for children—what information will be most useful?*

> *What do exhibit and program developers need to know about how children learn about other cultures in children's museums—what information about learning will be most useful?*

> *What is the best strategy for disseminating information to the professionals who develop, design, and build cultural exhibits for children—in what form will information be most useful?*

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[2] Possible exceptions included well-known exhibitions at major museums, like *Teen Tokyo* and the Japanese house of Boston Children's Museum. Because many museum professionals visited these exhibitions, watched visitors, and talked with staff, these exhibitions had a broader impact on the field.

Participants wanted to better understand the audiences for these exhibitions, how children learn about culture, and how to connect with community groups representing the cultures portrayed in their exhibitions. It was clear that the findings would need to be easily accessible, comprehensive, available in topic-specific segments, adaptable to readers' own circumstances, and usable by the many professionals who play a role in developing cultural exhibitions and programs.

Based on this input, this report has been made available in two formats: as a written report distributed to producing museums and key partners, and as a set of downloadable PDF files available on ACM's website. Each chapter was designed as a stand-alone document about a particular issue, and includes a recommendations section for applying these findings to future cultural exhibitions and programs. These recommendations focus on two goals: (a) providing guidance to children's museums that are developing their own exhibitions and programs about Asian and other cultures, and (b) giving the Association of Children's Museums guidance as they wrap up the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* and plan future large-scale initiatives. All recommendations are synthesized in the Executive Summary.

Although the research team recognizes that the actual audience for this report is broader, the report was written specifically for children's museum staff who will be developing the next few generations of cultural exhibitions and programs for children.

Description of the Chapters of this Report

Executive Summary and Recommendations

This document briefly summarizes the findings and conclusions from each chapter. It also includes a synthesis of the recommendations from the seven chapters, plus additional recommendations that transcend the foci of the individual chapters.

Introduction.

This chapter provides background information about the *Initiative* and briefly introduces each of the seven exhibitions. It presents the research questions and outlines the approach to the study as well as this report.

Chapter 1. Audiences for Cultural Exhibitions in Children's Museums

This chapter classifies and describes the visitors who came to *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions according to their degrees of interest in, knowledge about, and connection to the culture. It also analyzes the full range of ages of visitors who came to the *Initiative's* exhibitions and talks about what that means for the development and design of cultural exhibitions.

Chapter 2. Considering Child Development While Developing Cultural Exhibitions

How did the exhibition development teams plan for the broad range of development levels shown by the children who came to the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions? What were children of different ages doing in the exhibitions, and how did that reflect their understanding of other cultures? This chapter describes two tools to answer these questions and demonstrates how these tools can be used to develop and evaluate cultural exhibitions and programs.

Chapter 3. Contexts for Engaging Children With Other Cultures

How did the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* teams develop exhibitions that were fun and engaging places to play and learn about other cultures? This chapter describes the common types of settings and components that engaged children within the contexts of Asian cultures.

Chapter 4. Learning in Asian Exhibit Initiative Exhibitions

This chapter addresses the primary research question for this study: "What was the impact of the seven *Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative* traveling exhibitions on American children's understanding of Asian cultures?" It describes 10 types of learning that took place within the exhibitions and some factors that interfered with children's learning.

Chapter 5. Contributors to Children's Learning in Cultural Exhibitions

Although the original research question focused on the role of interactivity in these exhibitions, the team found that children's play and caregiver's support also were important factors in shaping children's learning in the *Initiative* exhibitions.

Chapter 6. Effects on Individual Children's Museums

Individual children's museums and their staff experienced a range of outputs, outcomes, and impacts as they either produced or hosted an *Initiative* exhibition. The challenges faced by host museums, and the practical lessons learned about developing exhibitions, collaborating with community organizations, and publicizing cultural exhibitions are addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 7. Effects on the Children's Museum Field

This chapter looks at the broader and longer term effects of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* by examining the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the Initiative on the children's museum field as a whole.

Appendix A. Descriptions of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Exhibitions

In this appendix the seven exhibitions are described using text and photographs.

Appendix B. Description of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Research Study

This appendix provides a detailed description of the research study's methodology, methods of data collection and analysis, and the design of the study. It also describes the study's data sources and respondents, and includes the topical framework for the study.

Appendix C. Data Tables

This appendix presents tables summarizing data from the host surveys and includes a copy of the host survey instrument.

Appendix D. Classified Bibliography

This appendix lists the many references that played a part in this study. Major sections list the evaluation reports for each exhibition, intermediate reports produced by the research team, and scholarly references about children's understanding of Asian and other cultures and the role of interactivity in children's museum learning.

References

The following reference was cited in this Introduction:

Fleishman-Hillard Knowledge Solutions. (2004). *Association of Children's Museums survey results ("omnibus survey").* Unpublished manuscript, Association of Children's Museums, Washington, DC.

A complete list of references consulted during this study is included as Appendix D: Classified Bibliography.

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Chapter 1:
AUDIENCES FOR CULTURAL EXHIBITIONS IN CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS

Introduction

The *Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative* (the *Initiative*) developed seven traveling exhibitions for children, each focusing on a single Asian culture. The exhibitions opened in early 2004, and each then traveled to at least 10 children's museums around the United States.[1, 2] As part of the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) commissioned a research study to assess the contributions of the *Initiative* to American children's understandings of Asian culture.[3] This chapter describes the types of visitors who attended the exhibitions as they traveled around the country.

Target Audience for the Exhibitions

The development teams designed the exhibitions for the *Initiative* target audience, American children, ages 5 to 12. The research team initially defined "American children" as children who were not members of the Asian communities represented in the exhibitions, but rather as visitors who (a) claim "American" heritage, (b) have had limited experience with these cultures, and (c) have limited and/or stereotypical understandings of that culture. During visits to the *Initiative* exhibitions around the country, it became obvious that the research team needed a better definition for the broad range of actual visitors. This chapter describes and analyzes the audiences for the exhibitions in children's museums around the country, and makes recommendations for the development of future cultural exhibitions.

This chapter discusses two different approaches to looking at visitors to cultural exhibitions: (a) by the type and degree of their connection to the culture depicted in the exhibition and (b) by their level of age-related development. The first approach is developed in-depth in this chapter. The second is so critical to children's museums that it is introduced in this chapter and then discussed in depth in Chapter 2, "Thinking About Child Development While Developing Cultural Exhibitions."

Children's Connections to the Culture

As researchers reviewed evaluation reports and observed and talked with museum visitors and staff, it was clear that visitors showed a wide variety of connections to Asia and Asian cultures, and these connections shaped visitors' experiences of the exhibitions in profound ways. The connections for the targeted American children are classified into three major groups, although in practice the boundaries between these groups were blurred.

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[1] For a detailed overview of the Initiative, see the Introduction to this report
[2] For a detailed description of each of the seven exhibitions, see Appendix A.
[3] For a description and overview of the research study, see Appendix B.

The three groups were:

Children with no special interest in, or knowledge of, the culture. This subgroup included children who regularly visited the museum and encountered the exhibition as they would any other part of the museum. In most museums, they were the largest audience for the exhibition.

Children who had a special interest in and knowledge of the culture portrayed in the exhibition, although this was not their ancestral culture. Based on their interest, these children entered with knowledge about some aspect of the culture, such as manga, anime, school-related studies, or martial arts.

Children for whom this was their ancestral culture. This group included children who had a parent, grandparent, or ancestor from this culture. This included recent immigrants to America, children of immigrants, and children adopted from Asian countries. Their caregivers often were trying to incorporate aspects of their ancestral culture as part of their children's upbringing.

Following are some special considerations that apply to each group.

Children With no Special Interest in, or Knowledge of, the Culture

Initiative teams developed the seven traveling exhibitions with this audience in mind. Although these children had little knowledge of the specific Asian culture portrayed in the exhibition, they did possess relevant cultural knowledge that developers used as starting points for their engagements with the exhibition. For example, these children recognized and knew how to use a range of objects and settings that were shared by their own culture and the one portrayed in the exhibition. They recognized couches, chalkboards, pots, beds, fruit, fishing nets, and wrapped packages, and knew what to do with them. They also recognized settings such as living rooms, classrooms, kitchens, bedrooms, stores, boats, and post offices, and could use these as settings for fantasy play with the objects they contained. Second, most American children participated in the globalized popular culture of childhood. They recognized toys produced by Asian cultures—like Hello Kitty, Pokémon, and Godzilla—even if they knew little or nothing about the toys' countries of origin. Also, when the exhibitions showed that Asian children owned Harry Potter books or Barbie backpacks, American children recognized the characters.

Children Who Had a Special Interest in and Knowledge of the Culture

Popular culture was one of several entry points through which some young American visitors had developed a special expertise in some aspect of an Asian culture. For instance, at the exhibition *Jump to Japan*, many younger children had seen the movie *My Neighbor, Totoro*, on which part of the exhibition was based, and the exhibition attracted many older children who were fans of *anime* and *manga*.

Other children had developed special knowledge in schools, or non-formal settings such as martial arts classes. For instance, researchers talked with a 12-year-old boy who had studied Viet Namese culture in school and was talking about it with his mother in the *Dragons and Fairies* exhibition about Viet Nam. Also, many American children enroll in Asian martial arts classes, including karate (Japanese) and Tai Kwan Do (Korean). To take advantage of this interest, some *Initiative* exhibits introduced martial arts in the exhibition (such as *Five Friends from Japan* and *Monkey King*), and many host museums included martial arts demonstrations in the exhibition programming related to their exhibition.

Kevin Crowley's research group introduced the term "island of expertise" to describe an area of relatively deep and rich knowledge that a child develops when passionately interested in a topic (Crowley & Jacobs, 2002). Crowley & Jacobs emphasized the role that parents play in preschool children's development and maintenance of knowledge, both as mentors and as co-explorers on the road to a shared island of expertise. Older children had often forged ahead of their parents within their special areas of knowledge, and these children sometimes shared what they knew with their caregivers and peers. Because of their growing island of deeper knowledge, even young children can think and talk in ever more sophisticated ways about the subject. Caregivers can explain and discuss these topics at deeper levels because they trust their children will understand (Crowley & Jacobs, 2002). However, it is important to remember that children's knowledge is, at best, an island — it usually stands alone in a sea of ignorance about other aspects of the Asian culture. These children's interests gave them motivation, and their knowledge gave them something to build on, but they still had far to go in understanding the focus culture.

Children for Whom This Was Their Ancestral Culture

Although researchers had originally assumed that they would be studying "American" children who did not claim Asian heritage, the visiting public proved more complex. Many visiting families claimed some Asian ancestry, and they brought their children to the exhibition to help them explore their cultural heritage.

In some families, the parents and older siblings were recent immigrants from an Asian country, but the younger children had been born in America, and even the older siblings saw the exhibition as a way to share their ancestral culture with their younger brothers and sisters. Some immigrant families were connected to their Asian American communities, where traditional dances, music, and cooking were still practiced. Some of these immigrant families started out as visitors to the exhibitions, but eventually became participants in programming related to the exhibition. Researchers also talked with families with a second- or third-generation connection to an Asian culture.

The *Initiative* exhibitions were also important to American families who had adopted children from Asia and were looking for ways to learn about and share their children's ancestral heritage. For instance, host museums reported that adoptive families flew across state lines to visit *Song of Korea* and other exhibitions. Host museums reported:[4]

> *We drew an audience of families from multi-states that have adopted Korean children. They came just to see this exhibit.*
>
> *Adoptive families of Korean children used [the] exhibit as a tool to explore children's heritage.*
>
> *We observed a larger attendance of families with adopted Asian children.*

Younger children in this group sometimes knew little about their ancestral culture, but their adoptive parents hoped their whole family would learn together.

[1] The quotations in this chapter were selected from host surveys as examples of the range of ways in which respondents discussed the topic in question. However, the number of quotations does not represent the relative frequency or strength of a particular response.

Some host museums reported that attracting more Asian American families was a major goal for hosting their *Initiative* exhibition:

> *We viewed hosting the exhibit as an opportunity to reach out to local Viet Namese audiences.*
>
> *Asians are among the fastest growing ethnic groups [in our area]. The subject/topic offered the possibility of bringing in more Asian visitors than we usually get, while hosting an exhibit at no rental fee.*

There are indications that most museums were successful in this effort, because almost two-thirds of the host museums reported an increase in Asian visitors during the run of their *Initiative* exhibition, as reported:

> *[A] noticeable increase in Asian family visitors.*
>
> *More visitors of Japanese heritage.*
>
> *The local Hmong community visited in force—and often.*
>
> *The Chinese-American population came from as far as 150 miles to attend.*

Although cultural-identity development of Asian American children was not a stated goal of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative*, it was an important outcome for many visitors and host museums.

Caregivers' Connections to the Culture

This section discusses how caregivers' connections to Asian cultures affected visits to Initiative exhibitions. Parents and other adult caregivers can be placed in the same three-part classification as their children. Caregivers' connections to the culture have important implications for the children they accompany in the exhibition. For instance, children with no special interest sometimes discovered, once they entered the exhibition, that their caregiver had a special connection to the culture. Perhaps the caregiver visited the country of origin on business or vacation, dated someone from that culture, or really loved that culture's food. The reverse was also true — children who studied the culture in school or martial arts classes, or who were popular culture fans, sometimes shared their special knowledge with their parents or caregivers within the exhibition. In some cases, a visiting family's adopted children traced their ancestry to the culture, yet their adoptive parents did not. These families were often learning about the culture together, discovering and sharing knowledge with each other.

Caregivers With Little Interest or Knowledge of the Culture

Although parents and other caregivers play a huge role in children's learning in museum settings, they often find themselves following their children through an exhibition on a topic that they know little about. Caregivers often search for labels or other interpretation that provide clues about what to say or do to help their children make sense of their experiences. That happened often in *Initiative* exhibitions, especially those about less familiar cultures, like Korean and Hmong, or with exhibits portraying unfamiliar settings and stories, like *Monkey King*.

Sometimes, however, caregivers assumed their children picked up on the things that they, themselves, easily recognized within an exhibition. Many caregivers walked through *Initiative* exhibitions without saying the name of the country or culture to their children, often because their charges zoomed ahead into the exhibition, and caregivers barely had time to catch up before they were

on to something else. In cases like these, young children barely recognized they were in an exhibition about a different place, and slightly older children recognized the setting only in a generic sense and called it, "China."

This caregiver category had a fuzzy boundary with the next one, because so many aspects of Asian culture have been incorporated into American culture (Yang et al, 1997). Caregivers in *Initiative* exhibitions often found themselves able to talk about, explain, and role play at least some aspects of Asian culture with their children; they could identify and rate their favorite plastic sushi served in *Japan and Nature*, urge their children to take off their shoes and step them through the tea ceremony in *Jump to Japan*, or help them use the beginner chopsticks in *Dragons and Fairies*. They could do this not because they had a special interest and knowledge, but because adults often learn about Asian cultures just by living in contemporary American culture. However, caregivers with an incomplete knowledge about the Asian culture portrayed in an exhibition often held stereotypic views, and they sometimes passed these stereotypes on to their children.

Caregivers Who Had a Special Interest in, and Knowledge, of the Culture

Some American caregivers had a deeper understanding of the culture portrayed in the exhibit. They sometimes found ways to share personal stories about things they had seen or done in that Asian country, or people they had known who belonged to that culture. For instance, in *Japan and Nature* researchers observed one father as he talked with his children about his upcoming business trip to Japan. Other caregivers had stories to tell based on their military service in Asian countries or on their friendships with Asians or Asian Americans. Their children were often unaware or had not thought much about these aspects of their caregivers' lives before touring the exhibition.

Caregivers for Whom This Was Their Ancestral Culture

As noted elsewhere in this report, many host museums wanted to attract more Asian American families with their *Initiative* exhibition, and most said they succeeded at this goal. Caregivers who belonged to this category had a wealth of knowledge to share, both with their own children and with other visitors to the exhibitions. They were often the greatest supporters of an exhibition about their ancestral culture. Some host museums even recruited Asian American visitors to help with related programming.

However, as some host museums found, adults from the focus culture could also be their most knowledgeable and passionate critics. Accuracy was critically important to members of the focus cultures, and fortunately that issue was addressed by the use of experts from the cultural group. It was more difficult to accommodate differing political views of immigrants, including some who had fled their homeland. Sometimes exhibit elements engendered controversies that were not readily resolved. For example, some host museums found there was controversy about a Communist flag flying in a video background.

Age-Related Development

It can be difficult to apply either age categories or traditional developmental stages to children's understanding of culture, given the important role that experience plays in learning about culture.

There are two important findings to keep in mind. First, children's museum audiences include both children and adult caregivers. Typically, about half the visitors to a children's museum are adults (e.g., Ringel, 2005). Both children and adults have to be considered when trying to understand the effectiveness of cultural exhibitions, especially because adult caregivers may show low levels of development in their understanding of other cultures, despite their chronological age. Second, the actual age of the children who visit children's museums includes many children younger than the *Initiative's* target age range of 5 to 12 years.

Many host museums found that their Asian Exhibit Initiative exhibitions attracted more adults than was usual, sometimes even adults without children. These adults were often drawn by their special interests in or ancestral connections to the culture.

> *We had significantly larger [number of] Asian visitors, specifically adults.*
>
> *Seniors from the Japanese Cultural Center and other community organizations participated in our opening events and visited.*
>
> *Several adults who worked in Hmong refugee camps in Thailand came.*

Jump to Japan, with its focus on anime and manga, also attracted many older children to the host museums.

> *We found the middle school and high school students to be interested in [Jump to Japan].*
>
> Jump to Japan *drew a greater proportion of older children.*

Other host museums noticed increased numbers of school groups from higher grades (compared to their usual school visitors).

> *We saw an increase in upper-elementary grade school groups. [*Song of Korea *host museum]*
>
> *A few middle school classes made field trips. [*Hmong at Heart *host museum]*

However, at the other end of the age spectrum, the majority of the children who visited the *Initiative* exhibitions were younger than eight years old. Most of the host museums for *Initiative* exhibitions defined their target audiences as children from birth to two through age eight or ten (see Tables C-1 and C-2 in Appendix C). In many children's museums, most child visitors are five years old or younger. For instance, at the Children's Museum in Boston, about 28% of the children who visit are ages 6-15 years, 53% are ages 2-5 years, and 19% are 1 year or younger (data recalculated from Ringel, 2005).

Given the large age range of visitors coming to *Initiative* exhibitions, the implications of child development and the associated development of knowledge about other cultures were so important that this report devotes a whole chapter to it (Chapter 2, "Thinking About Child Development While Developing Cultural Exhibitions"). That chapter describes two ways of coming to grips with the diversity inherent in a target audience that ranges not only from 5 to 12 years, but also from birth to adult. The implications of adults' still-developing knowledge of culture are discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, "Contributors to Children's Learning in Cultural Exhibitions."

Recommendations

The following general recommendations are for museum staff developing future cultural exhibitions.

Develop richer and more functional ways to describe the audiences for cultural exhibitions. During exhibition planning and development, the description of the exhibition's proposed audiences should go beyond age ranges to include levels of interest, prior knowledge, and experience with the culture, and consider age-related intellectual and emotional development. Some possible approaches are discussed in Chapter 2, "Considering Child Development When Designing Cultural Exhibitions."

Set goals appropriate for the audiences' range of ages, interests, and levels of experience with the culture. The goals can be ambitious, but in developmentally appropriate ways. During this study, researchers found many instances where goals considered ambitious for three-year-olds were able to co-exist with ambitious goals for twelve-year-olds and for caregivers. Some examples are included in Chapter 2, "Considering Child Development When Designing Cultural Exhibitions," and Chapter 4, "Learning in the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Exhibitions."

Develop exhibits that are engaging and effective for a broad range of ages, interests, and levels of experience with the culture. The *Initiative* exhibitions included several approaches that worked well for the broad audiences who visited the host museums. Those approaches are the focus of Chapter 3, "Techniques for Engaging Children in Other Cultures."

Plan for a broad range of learning outcomes, appropriate for the diverse audience. As mentioned in the previous recommendation, learning is the focus of both Chapter 4, "Learning in the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Exhibitions," and Chapter 5, "Contributors to Children's Learning in Cultural Exhibitions."

Develop a culturally sensitive approach by engaging representatives of the culture in exhibit and program planning. Many host museums found engaging the community to be one of the most satisfying aspects of their *Initiative* experiences, as detailed in Chapter 6, "Effects on Individual Children's Museums."

See the Executive Summary for a synthesis of all the recommendations from this report.

References

The following references are cited in this chapter.

Crowley, K. & Jacobs, M. (2002). Building islands of expertise in everyday family activity. In G. Leinhardt, K. Crowley, & K. Knutson (Eds.), *Learning conversations in museums* (pp. 333-356). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ringel, G. (2005). *Designing exhibits for kids: What are we thinking?* Paper presented at the J. Paul Getty Museum Symposium, "From Content to Play: Family-Oriented Interactive Spaces in Art and History Museums," June 4-5, 2005. Retrieved August 1, 2007, from the Getty Web site: http://www.getty.edu/education/symposium/Ringel.pdf

Yang, J., Gan, D., Hong, T. & the staff of A. Magazine. (1997). *Eastern Standard Time: A guide to Asian influence on American culture from Astro Boy to Zen Buddhism*. New York: Mariner Books.

A complete list of references consulted during this study is included as Appendix D: Classified Bibliography.

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Chapter 2:
CONSIDERING CHILD DEVELOPMENT WHILE DEVELOPING CULTURAL EXHIBITIONS

Introduction

The *Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative* (the *Initiative*) developed seven traveling exhibitions for children, each focusing on a single Asian culture. The exhibitions opened in early 2004, and each then traveled to at least 10 children's museums around the United States.[1, 2] As part of the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) commissioned a research study to assess the contributions of the *Initiative* to American children's understandings of Asian culture.[3] This chapter focuses on how understanding child development contributes to the creation and evaluation of cultural exhibitions for children.

Child Development and Cultural Exhibitions

The primary target audience for the *Initiative* exhibitions was defined as American children, ages 5 to 12. However, as described in Chapter 1, "Audiences for Cultural Exhibitions in Children's Museums," the children who actually visited the exhibitions covered a much broader age range. At many host museums, the majority of children in the exhibitions were less than seven years old. Also, some exhibitions attracted older children who often were drawn by their special interests in Asian popular culture.

The challenge for the producing museums was to develop engaging and effective exhibitions for children from across this developmental spectrum. To help them meet this challenge, ACM asked each of the seven exhibition projects to create a developmental framework for their exhibition. These *developmental frameworks* were a way to incorporate theory and research on child development into the exhibition planning process. The frameworks, in a sense, represented children's potential to understand and learn from these cultural exhibitions. Ideally, they guided the creation of exhibitions that allowed all children to learn in developmentally appropriate ways.

As the research team gathered observational and interview data in *Initiative* exhibitions, they needed to factor child development into their analysis. They did so by developing a hierarchical approach to linking children's play within the exhibitions to their understanding of that culture. The resulting *play* and *knowledge hierarchies* describe children's physical and intellectual engagements within the exhibitions. In contrast to the frameworks, the hierarchies represent what children were actually understanding and learning in the exhibitions.

These two approaches to child development are complementary. Developmental frameworks are based in theory and research, general in scope, and designed for use in exhibition planning. Play and knowledge hierarchies are empirical,

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[1] For a detailed overview of the *Initiative*, see the Introduction to this report
[2] For a detailed description of each of the seven exhibitions, see Appendix A.
[3] For a description and overview of the research study, see Appendix B.

developed for specific exhibitions, and designed for evaluation and research in completed exhibitions. This chapter explains these two approaches in detail and recommends ways that children's museums can incorporate them in the creation and evaluation of cultural exhibitions for children.

Developmental Frameworks

Developmental frameworks are based on the concept of developmentally appropriate practice. In a paper describing the creation and use of developmental frameworks during the *Initiative*, Jeanne Vergeront described developmental appropriate practice as follows.

> Developmentally appropriate *is an approach based on knowledge about how children develop and learn, addressing not only what should be learned but also how it is best learned and when. For children's museums a developmental approach to exhibit and program planning is a primary way to understand and focus on its audience. With challenging content such as culture, a developmental approach assists museum planners in finding ways to help the child connect with cultural content in relevant, meaningful ways* (Vergeront, 2003, p. 1).

Although developmental frameworks have been used in early childhood education and pediatricians' offices for many years, prior to the *Initiative* they were seldom applied in children's museums. Developmental frameworks were designed for the *Initiative* with several purposes in mind.

> *A developmental framework for the* Initiative *was intended to look at information about children five-to-twelve years old through the lens of understanding culture, one's own and others. It would help answer the general question: "Based on what we know about these children – their age, development, experiential backgrounds – how will they experience and understand the exhibit message and activity?" More like a snapshot of how children are likely to experience cultural information, a framework is not a standard nor does it establish expectations of what should happen at a given age* (Vergeront, 2003, p. 2-3).

Working within general guidelines developed by ACM, the producing museums developed a variety of approaches to this task. For instance, the *Hmong at Heart* and *Song of Korea* projects shared a theory- and research-based framework developed by Hardin L.K. Coleman and Michael J. Karcher of the University of Wisconsin. This approach described a three-stage model of how children develop cultural understanding, which was related to children's age and experience with other cultures (Coleman & Karcher, 2003). Several other projects developed frameworks presented as tables describing characteristics of children for a series of age ranges. For instance, the *Japan and Nature* team's framework tracked changes in children's understanding of self, place, community, and culture for four age ranges: preschool-5 years, 5-7 years, 7-10 years, and 10-12 years. This framework also described developmentally appropriate themes within the natural and social sciences and children's preferred modes of learning at each age range (Brooklyn Children's Museum, 2003). The *Jump to Japan* developmental framework took a similar approach by tracing changes in social developmental abilities and stages of cultural understanding for four age ranges (3-5 years, 5-7 years, 7-9 years, and 10-12 years). In addition, this framework described how children might engage with specific exhibit elements for each age range and listed questions that adults could use to scaffold children's developing understandings (Minnesota Children's Museum & The Children's Museum, Seattle, 2003).

Creating developmental frameworks proved a challenging task for the exhibition teams.

> *When the developmental framework was a museum's first, a great deal of time and work was invested before the value of the framework was apparent. When a framework's function had previously been served by referencing curriculum standards on a case-by-case basis for specific components, preparing an entire framework in advance initially seemed like a daunting task. And even when a developmental framework was already integrated into exhibit planning as a tool to focus on the audience, the focus shifted from curriculum standards to social and physical readiness (Vergeront, 2003, p. 5).*

As Vergeront (2003) describes, developmental frameworks can play many roles in an exhibition development process. The framework can be used as an educational tool for the exhibition team by reviewing relevant theory and research and by making theory more concrete and practical. Also, the framework can help the team write developmentally appropriate goals for the exhibition and create developmentally appropriate activities that help young visitors meet those goals. Most exhibition teams find that their creative process produces more ideas than can be built for the final exhibition. As the exhibition team sorts through these possibilities, a developmental framework can help them analyze the potential effectiveness of each potential exhibit and prioritize them. The framework can help the team create the most effective exhibition possible with limited resources. Finally, once the exhibition is complete, the developmental framework can be used to guide the exhibition's summative evaluation and to train education staff, floor staff, and volunteers who will be working with visitors.

Realistically, many children's museum exhibitions are created with limited budgets, and most children's museum staff do not have time to create their own developmental framework from scratch. Therefore, the *Initiative* research team developed a model framework that can be used by children's museums as they plan their own exhibitions and programs about other cultures. The model framework is based on several *Initiative* frameworks (especially the frameworks developed for *Jump to Japan*, *Japan and Nature*, *Hmong at Heart*, and *Song of Korea*.) The producing museums worked hard – even struggled – with this process. The generalized model greatly simplifies their efforts, but also makes it easier to explain what they accomplished with their frameworks. The finished framework is a large document, and the completed model is included both at the end of this chapter and as a separate Word file available on the ACM and Selinda Research Associates Web sites.

The model framework is developed in tabular form, as shown in the outline view in Figure 2-1. The rows are defined as age ranges, rather than grade levels or developmental stages. Even though a child's experience with other cultures and a range of factors also affect his or her abilities and understandings related to a given culture, the effects of these factors are poorly understood and, at this point, difficult to define within a broad-ranging stage theory of cultural development. Also, the age-range approach is more concrete – users of the framework know children within each age range, and thus can bring to mind specific examples for each stage. The column titles describe various characteristics that relate to their understanding of other cultures and that vary, more or less, by age. These could also vary depending on the needs of a given project.

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[1] The quotations in this chapter were selected from host surveys as examples of the range of ways in which respondents discussed the topic in question. However, the number of quotations does not represent the relative frequency or strength of a particular response.

	Abilities		Understanding		
Age Range	Intellectual	Social	Self	Community	Cultures
3-5 years					
5-7 years					
7-10 years					
10-12 years					

Figure 2-1. Outline view of a model developmental framework for cultural exhibitions and programs.

The challenge, then, is to fill in the empty boxes in Figure 2-1 using reference materials such as those listed in the classified bibliography, Appendix D. While this effort can be very time-consuming, the exhibition team builds a body of knowledge about child development that can be applied to both this exhibition and the next, and that can be made available to staff throughout the museum. Column by column, row by row, the literature research continues until every box is filled. In the completed model framework at the end of this chapter, the descriptions within the boxes may seem like gross generalizations, and educators and parents may know individual children who don't fit the general categories. However, the intent is to describe overall trends in development for a given age range.

Note that the last two columns, tentatively labeled "goals" and "strategies," were left blank, so that individual project teams can adapt the framework to their own needs.

Play and Knowledge Hierarchies

As noted earlier, developmental frameworks are based in theory and research, general in scope, and designed for use in planning. To complement the developmental frameworks, the *Initiative* research team created additional tools based on observations and interviews of actual visitors in particular exhibitions. These tools, called *play* and *knowledge hierarchies*, were used to analyze the many things that happen in an exhibition as it is explored by a range of visitors, from babies through adults, from novices to those with deep experience and knowledge of the culture portrayed in an exhibition.

The starting point for these tools was the knowledge hierarchy technique developed by Perry (1989, 1993). A knowledge hierarchy presents a range of visitor understandings about a certain topic, based on the assumptions that (a) there is an internal knowledge structure inherent in an exhibition topic, and (b) a hierarchy can be constructed that represents the intersection of the exhibition developers' and the visitors' approaches to organizing and understanding the topic. Development of a knowledge hierarchy usually begins with an understanding of the learning goals for an exhibition – what do developers hope that visitors will learn about the topic based on their experiences? Then, based on observations and interviews with visitors to the exhibition, the knowledge hierarchy is developed to describe how visitors think about and make sense of the topic. The hierarchy usually describes six or seven levels of understanding, covering a full range of how visitors think about the topic in increasing levels of sophistication. In other words, the hierarchy represents, in manageable form, virtually all visitors' understandings about that aspect of the topic.

Selinda Research Associates has used knowledge hierarchies in a variety of exhibitions, usually based on interviews with a visitor audience composed of mostly older children and adults (e.g., Gyllenhaal, Perry, & Forland, 1996; Perry, Garibay, & Gyllenhaal, 1998). The challenge for the *Initiative* research team was to develop an approach adapted to an audience composed mostly of children that accurately described how they experienced exhibitions. To meet this challenge, the team first developed a hierarchy to describe what children were actually doing in the exhibitions. This *play hierarchy* described both children's play within the exhibitions and how they were thinking about their own play. The play hierarchy was then transformed into a somewhat more abstract knowledge hierarchy describing children's understanding of the topic of the exhibition.

As an example, Figure 2-2 is a play hierarchy for a specific exhibit in *Japan and Nature*. A Japanese drum was part of the exhibition set in autumn in a temple. The drum was placed in front of a video that showed a parade as part of a festival celebration. Children were invited to take a costume from a basket, put it on, and play the drum. As they did so, they could watch a video of similarly dressed Japanese children playing drums in the festival parade. Many children six, seven, and eight years old were observed doing just that. As researchers watched and listened to them play, and later talked with them and their parents, it was clear that many children were pretending they were in Japan, that they were Japanese children, and they were playing a "traditional" drum. (That word "tradition" came up a lot with children — that seems to be a good word for their initial understandings of what adults call "culture.")

Level	Description of Play
0	Hear the sound, feel the vibration.
1	I wonder what it's called?
2	I'm playing with a drum...
	...in a parade...
	... in a far away place....
	... in another country, which I call "China."
3	I'm playing in Japan...
	..as a Japanese child...
	...doing a Japanese tradition.
4	I'm playing the drum in a festival parade in a special place (a temple) and season (autumn).
5	As I play, I'm thinking and sometimes talking or reading about what it means.

Figure 2-2. Play Hierarchy for a Japanese drum (Japan and Nature). Children were invited to put on a costume and play the drum. As they did so, they could watch a video of similarly-dressed Japanese children playing drums in a festival parade.

The six levels of the play hierarchy in Figure 2-2 are defined as:

Level 0: **Sensory engagement**. Children at this level played the drum for the sensory experience – hearing the sounds, feeling the vibrations in the drum head or sticks, and seeing the bright colors in the accompanying video. They did not think much about where it was from or what it was called. Children at this level were often pre-verbal, younger than 18 months. Often playing along with their parents, they had a wonderful, developmentally appropriate experience. However, they were not yet capable of thinking about other countries and cultures, and many were too young to learn about the name of the thing they were experiencing.

Level 1: **"What's this?"** Slightly older children showed potential for learning as they asked their caregiver what the drum was called (or as they listened and repeated the word their caregiver provided unbidden). Learning the names for things was, for them, an important developmental task. Although they were playing in an exhibit about Japan, the word they learned was broadly applicable to their own lives – they were learning about their own culture as much as any other.

Level 2: **I'm playing with a drum, marching in a parade – in a place that's far away.** Level 2 was a transitional phase, where children began with an incomplete understanding of the exhibit's object and setting and then built on what they knew. At a minimum, children on this level recognized things in common with their own culture – the drum itself and children marching in the parade. They played along, although they were most often being themselves, not taking on the role of a child seen in the video. However, children at this level often noted differences between what they saw in the exhibit and their own lives. They recognized that this was supposed to be another place, far away – in another country, for children who knew that there are other places called "countries." The most accomplished children on this level were on the verge of understanding specifically what the object was, what country it came from, and who made and used it. However, as they worked toward this level of understanding children sometimes detoured into incorrect interpretations. For instance, children sometimes used their prior experiences with Asian cultures to try to name the place this drum was from. If their knowledge was limited to a single Asian culture, they sometimes mislabeled the place as "China."

Level 3: **I'm pretending that I'm in Japan, and I'm a Japanese child playing a drum in a parade that is a Japanese tradition.** Children on Level 3 had achieved a basic understanding of the developer's intent and immersed themselves in the role-playing experience. At a minimum, they were pretending they were in Japan and they often knew that the children in the video were called "Japanese," and thus pretended to be Japanese children. Some children also realized that Japanese people did things differently and the word they used to describe what Japanese people did was often "tradition" rather than "culture."

Level 4: **I'm playing the drum in a temple for an autumn festival.** Children on Level 4 had picked up additional details about the setting's place and time, perhaps from close observation, reading labels, or discussions with their caregivers. In their imaginations, these children played out their deeper understanding of the role they were playing, which sometimes led them to think about why it was played in that place at that time.

Level 5: **As I play, I'm thinking, talking, or reading about what it means.** Through their play and interactions with caregivers (and with other parts of the exhibit), children on Level 5 had gained a more abstract and conceptual understanding of the drum and its surroundings. They had moved beyond role-play and into a more contemplative mode.

Based on their age and previous experience, children came to the exhibit primed to explore and play on a particular level of the hierarchy, and they had memorable, developmentally appropriate experiences at that level. However, as they played, observed, and talked with caregivers, children sometimes moved up a level or two in the hierarchy. Moving up the play hierarchy took more than play alone; it took knowledge about the objects of play. Children had to learn about where the objects originated, the culture that produced them, and the people who used them. As three-year-olds played with the drum and watched the video, their caregivers sometimes explained that this place looked different because it was another country, far away. Six-year-olds, on their own, sometimes used the name "China," but then their caregivers explained that it was really called "Japan." Twelve-year-olds sometimes read or talked with caregivers about the Japanese religion and wondered how it differed from their own.

Clearly, children's play was influenced by what they knew, or didn't know, about the culture in question, and their role-playing evolved as they learned more about the culture. Thus the play hierarchy (Fig. 2-2) can be transformed into a *knowledge hierarchy*, which describes what children know and have yet to learn on each level (Fig. 2-3).

The knowledge hierarchy makes it clear that there is much to learn about the Japanese drum and this seemingly simple exhibit. Each level is described in both general terms (middle column) and as a specific message that children learn and understand at that level (right column). Corresponding with the play hierarchy, Level 0 represents sensory knowledge developed through engagement with the exhibit, and Level 1 indicates a question in the child's mind and the wish to find the answer. Level 2 depicts children's incomplete and/or incorrect ways of thinking about the drum and its setting, and Level 3 is a basic understanding – simple, yet essentially correct. Levels 4 and 5 are increasingly abstract ways of understanding the drum and its uses and meanings within Japanese culture. The richness of this small exhibit was apparent because children at all levels of the hierarchy understood and learned about the drum in developmentally appropriate ways.

In the *Initiative's* research, play and knowledge hierarchies were used to organize and analyze volumes of data. As matching pairs of knowledge and play hierarchies were developed for many different exhibit components and settings in the seven exhibitions, it became clear that children of all ages were learning both specific details and larger concepts. For further analysis of children's learning in *Initiative* exhibitions, see Chapter 4: "Learning in *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Exhibitions."

Recognizing what the knowledge hierarchies had in common, the research team created a generalized knowledge hierarchy, included at the end of this chapter. Like the specific hierarchies above, it shows how children's understanding of place, people, and cultural concepts can develop in cultural exhibits for children. The generalized hierarchy was designed as a tool for children's museum staff to adapt and use as they organize observations of their own cultural exhibitions and programs. The rightmost columns are tentatively labeled "What do children at this level *do* at the exhibit?" and "What do children at this level *know* and/or *learn*?" These columns should be filled in by museum staff as they observe and talk with visitors at the exhibition. Users may want to modify the levels defined on the leftmost columns to better describe what they observe in their own exhibits or programs.

Level	Description of Understanding	
0	sensory knowledge	Remember how it sounds and feels.
1	wondering...	What is it?
2	know the object	It's a drum.
	know the setting	The drum is played in a parade.
	know it's different	It's set in a faraway place
	try to name the place	It's another country, which I call "China."
3	know the country	It's set in Japan.
	know the people	The drum is played by Japanese children.
	know about its culture	It's a Japanese tradition.
4	know details of place and time	Japanese children play this drum in a festival parade in a special place (the temple) and season (autumn).
5	understand deeper concepts	Nature and the seasons are important to Japanese religions.

Figure 2-3. Knowledge Hierarchy for a Japanese drum (*Japan and Nature*).

Recommendations

For children's museums with cultural exhibitions and programs:

Use developmental frameworks to plan cultural exhibitions and programs for children. These can start with the model framework, with a producing museum's framework, or from scratch. Continue to adapt and modify this approach until it fits the individual museum's needs and goals.

Use play and knowledge hierarchies to evaluate cultural exhibits and programs. Observe and talk with young visitors and parents to discover what they are doing and understanding about the cultures portrayed. Use these findings to modify existing exhibits and programs as needed, or to plan new ones.

For ACM:

Post examples of the producing museums' developmental frameworks on the ACM Web site. Additional examples will help other children's museums as they incorporate frameworks into their own planning processes.

Sponsor the creation of new developmental frameworks. Developmental frameworks on a range of topics can be created and disseminated as a standard part of ACM-sponsored initiatives and programs.

Track the use of developmental frameworks and knowledge hierarchies in children's museums. Case studies could be published in Hand to Hand, and successful examples could be posted on the ACM Web site.

See the Executive Summary for a synthesis of all the recommendations from this report.

References

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Appendix D: Classified Bibliography includes a list of references consulted by the producing museums as they created their developmental frameworks.

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Model Developmental Framework for Planning Cultural Exhibitions and Programs

Selinda Research Associates, Inc.

For a short explanation of developmental frameworks, please consult Chapter 2 of this report and Vergeront (2003). This developmental framework incorporates elements from developmental frameworks created by several of the Asian Exhibit Initiative exhibition projects, especially Jump to Japan, Hmong at Heart, and Japan and Nature.

This framework is intended as a starting point for making a developmental framework that is appropriate to individual museum's needs. Depending on an exhibition's or program's goals, users may want to add, modify, or delete columns, or re-title or otherwise modify the rows. The rightmost columns should be filled in by the museum's project team.

Age Range	*Intellectual Abilities*	*Social Abilities*	*Understanding of Self*	*Understanding of Own Community*	*Understanding of Other Cultures*	*Given what we know: Goals*	*Given what we know: Strategies*
3-5 years	Constantly reading the environment—label objects frequently seen or used. Manipulative experiences important. Love being read to and love to do their own "reading" in picture books.	Aware of social interactions. Have an interest in mimicking others, especially adults. Most children in this age range are able to create fantasy play, and they are beginning cooperative play with others.	Define themselves by their physical attributes (hair, skin, height), activities (play, games) and possessions (toys, collections). Older children in this age range are becoming aware that they have individual similarities to, and differences from, other people.	Understanding of their own community is at the fantasy stage, including fantasy role-playing of occupations. Children recognize that some objects in exhibits about other cultures represent things familiar from their own lives, like cars, drums, fruit, and so forth. They may play with these objects and settings as if they were part of their own, familiar world.	Younger children in this range have an "egocentric or undifferentiated perspective," where others are not considered to be different from self. Older children in this range may be aware that other cultural traditions and perspectives may be different from their own, and may have biases about these differences.		

Age Range	*Intellectual Abilities*	*Social Abilities*	*Understanding of Self*	*Understanding of Own Community*	*Understanding of Other Cultures*	*Given what we know: Goals*	*Given what we know: Strategies*
5–7 years	Shift in cognitive development leads to interest in cause and effect in the natural world. Begin to understand the interconnections of things, but struggle to integrate this information into their daily lives. Love to ask questions. Want to know "why?" and "how?" Like new ideas, but also cling to old. Motivated by stimulating activities and interaction with objects. Like to collect and sort. Enjoy process, especially a group process, more than product.	Understand appropriate and non-appropriate behavior based on their social system (a clear right and wrong). Peer influence is becoming more important. Pursue role-play and group play experiences.	See themselves as center of the universe. May still define themselves by their physical attributes (hair, skin, height), activities (play, games) and possessions (toys, collections). Realize that humanity, gender, and individuality are permanent, but base this belief on physical and behavioral characteristics rather than something deeper.	Well oriented in home, school, church, and neighborhood. Community interests now include details about stores, police station, firehouse, and hospital. Mostly interested in own home and neighborhood. Often describe themselves in terms of their geographic connections or family configurations.	Recognize differences in others' perspectives, but also interested in knowing that others may have similar perspectives. Can share what is common, and want to know why things may be different. Interested in how others live as related to their own basic needs (food, shelter, daily activities). Not aware of their own culturalness, so they will see other cultures as foreign or odd. Some will seek explanations for the differences they see in other cultures. With guidance, they may become more interested in seeing how these things work for others, and may question how it relates to their world.		

Age Range	*Intellectual Abilities*	*Social Abilities*	*Understanding of Self*	*Understanding of Own Community*	*Understanding of Other Cultures*	*Given what we know: Goals*	*Given what we know: Strategies*
7-10 years	Have a literal understanding of the world. Want to make sense of, and bring order to, their world. Able to follow complex directions and stories. Able to read, write, and communicate clear messages. Interested in classification and seriation (e.g., rock collections and collectible cards). Can learn about long ago and faraway—but may have difficulty learning about both at the same time.	Able to compare and contrast ideas and feelings. Significantly influenced by older peers. Interested in playing organized games with others. Love group games. Gravitate toward same-gender activities. Enjoy creating fantasy worlds, which have a structured storyline and narrative.	Sexual, racial, and ethnic identities and group affiliations begin to emerge. May connect their self-definition to favorite activities. Create a sense of meaning of themselves based on stories they have created using information from a variety of sources. Begin to give psychological reasons for their permanence as individuals (although these reasons may seem rather superficial to an adult).	Seek information about how others do the same thing.	Aware of how others might view their thoughts and feelings. Enjoy studying cultures other than their own. Want to make sense of how other traditions and cultural styles are useful to them. Interested in languages and communication styles of other peoples. Differences shown by other cultures can be a challenge, because differences challenge their sense of competence. They begin to place differential value on differences they observe, and they are increasingly drawn to commonalities, both for security and ego gratification.		

Age Range	*Intellectual Abilities*	*Social Abilities*	*Understanding of Self*	*Understanding of Own Community*	*Understanding of Other Cultures*	*Given what we know: Goals*	*Given what we know: Strategies*
10-12 years	Interested in facts and correct information. Compare new information to their reality and known facts. Enjoy creating new theories based on facts. Have increased ability for abstract intellectual pursuits. Their interest in rules and challenging rules makes board games, intellectual puzzles, brainteasers, and even tests enjoyable and productive experiences.	Able to sympathize and empathize with others' feelings and emotions. Look to others for mentor or hero figures. Want to know that they can connect with the emotional experience of others, and how to have a relationship with others that is mutually satisfying. Can also develop intolerance for others based on information reinforced by peers, family, and school environment.	Bodies begin to change. Begin to go through a "search for self." Begin to challenge all their assumptions about the world and in turn challenge many of the adult parameters they have previously accepted. Work on integrating their identity with messages from their peers, their environment, and their parents. Older children develop strong personal identities. They are interested in how they, as unique individuals, can fit with other individuals and into the group.	Begin seeing themselves as active, confident participants in their community and as valued individuals in society. Interested in community service.	Understand that there are different world views and can adjust their own view with new information. Can begin to appreciate that they differ from others because they have different thoughts and feelings, not just different appearances and possessions. Can understand that cultures are functional, with practices that serve a purpose. Can be open to other cultures' practices out of a belief that they serve some purpose. Can develop a true interest in other groups, and a desire to figure out how other cultures use their practices to meet their needs.		

A Generalized Knowledge Hierarchy for Evaluating Cultural Exhibits for Children

Selinda Research Associates. Inc.

This knowledge hierarchy incorporates elements from play hierarchies and knowledge hierarchies developed for the Asian Exhibit Initiative research project. For explanations of knowledge hierarchies, please consult Chapter 2 of the Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report. This generalized hierarchy is intended to be a starting point for developing specific hierarchies appropriate to individual museum's needs. The rightmost columns should be filled in by the museum's project team.

Level	Description	What did children at this level do at the exhibit?	What did children at this level know and/or learn?
0	Sensory knowledge		
1	I wonder what it is?		
2	Know the object		
	Know the setting		
	Know that it's far away		
	Try to name the place		
3	Know the country		
	Know the people		
	Know that it's about their traditions and culture		
4	Know details of place and time		
5	Understand deeper concepts		

Chapter 3:
CONTEXTS FOR ENGAGING CHILDREN WITH OTHER CULTURES

Introduction

The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative (the *Initiative*) developed seven traveling exhibitions for children, each focusing on a single Asian culture. The exhibitions opened in early 2004, and each then traveled to at least 10 children's museums around the United States.[1, 2] As part of the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) commissioned a research study to assess the contributions of the *Initiative* to American children's understandings of Asian culture.[3] This chapter reviews the common ways the exhibitions provided cultural contexts for play and learning.

Approaches to Cultural Exhibitions

The seven *Initiative* exhibitions focused on five different cultures and on different aspects of those cultures. For instance, *Japan and Nature* looked at the roles that nature and the seasons play in Japanese culture, *Jump to Japan* introduced visitors to the Japanese art forms, *manga* and *anime*, and *Five Friends from Japan* encouraged visitors to compare the lives of five different Japanese children. Two exhibitions focused on traditional folktales: *Dragons & Fairies* told a series of Viet Namese folktales, while the *Monkey King* depicted major events from a Chinese epic story. *Hmong at Heart* told the true story of the Hmong people's migration to the United States. Finally, *Song of Korea* focused on the role of music in Korean culture.

Despite these different cultures and different foci, the exhibitions shared some important features. Children were able to interact, play, and learn in similar ways in all seven exhibitions. Many of these shared exhibit features can be applied to other cultural exhibitions.

The research team classified the many features found in *Initiative* exhibitions into two broad categories: *contextual settings* and *contextual components*. Contextual settings were immersive re-creations of places, real and imaginary. They were whole and interconnected – usually big enough to walk inside. They organized information, conveyed spatial and temporal relationships, and gave a multitude of clues that reinforced messages in the exhibitions. Contextual settings usually did not require much explicit interpretation through text. Contextual components were physical objects, included as part of the contextual setting, that were designed to engage children in particular ways. The components were easily recognized by visitors – a motor scooter, a kite, a drum – and visitors' interpretation was guided by the way the component was embedded in its setting. Consequently, a motor scooter was not just any motor scooter, but one that visitors rode through a Viet Namese city. The contextual settings provided a storyline for play, and the contextual components suggested specific possibilities for play.

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[1] For a detailed overview of the *Initiative*, see the Introduction to this report.
[2] For a detailed description of each of the seven exhibitions, see Appendix A.
[3] For a description and overview of the research study, see Appendix B.

Contextual Settings

All seven *Initiative* exhibitions included contextual settings representing places important to the focus culture. Some were of real places, and some were imaginary places described in that culture's stories. For instance, most of the exhibitions included realistic re-creations of buildings, rooms, and outdoor spaces that represented the focus culture. Realistic but downsized building façades were included in *Song of Korea* (Fig. 3-1 A), *Dragons and Fairies* (Fig. 3-1 B), and most of the other exhibitions. (See Appendix A for more examples.)

Fig. 3-1. A. Façade of a traditional Korean home from *Song of Korea* (left). B. Façade of a Viet Namese home from *Dragons and Fairies* (right).

Both of the buildings shown in Figure 3.1 included realistic interiors (Fig. 3-2 A and B), which visitors encountered when they walked through the front doors. In other exhibitions, visitors entered directly into bedrooms, shops, living rooms, and classrooms, without first walking through a façade. Examples included a traditional drum workshop in *Song of Korea* (Fig. 3-3 A), a Japanese living room in *Five Friends from Japan* (Fig. 3-3 B), and outdoor settings, like a garden (Fig. 3-4 A), outdoor market (Fig. 3-4 B), and a fishing boat (Fig 3-5A).

Fig. 3-2. A. Interior of a traditional Korean home (left). B. Interior of the Viet Namese home (right). Both included labels and cases with protected artifacts, as well as hands-on re-creations of artifacts for play.

Fig. 3-3. A. Re-creation of a drum workshop from *Song of Korea* (left). B. Re-creation of a Japanese living room from *Five Friends from Japan* (right). Visitors did not pass through building façades as they entered these spaces.

Fig. 3-4. A. Garden from the United States section of *Hmong at Heart* (left). B. Outdoor market from *Dragons and Fairies* (right).

Fig. 3-5 A. Fishing boat (left). B. Motor scooter (right). Both forms of transportation were in *Dragons and Fairies*. The outdoor context for the boat was a painted backdrop, but the context for the scooter was a video mounted in front of the handlebars.

None of these re-creations was completely accurate. Most broke from the context in important ways by including labels, photo cutouts of people (Fig. 3-1 A), and protected cases for artifacts as well as loose artifacts for play (Fig. 3-2 A and B). Despite not being completely accurate, the settings were easily recognized by children who quite literally played along. (See the play hierarchies discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 for examples.)

The contextual settings discussed above were re-creations of real settings. The *Monkey King* exhibition, however, was set in an imaginary past, as told in an epic Chinese folktale. The re-created settings in this exhibition mingled reality and fantasy in ways appropriate to this theme. These settings included a life-sized peach tree (Fig. 3-6 A) and banquet table (Fig. 3-6 B), where the Monkey King worked his mischief with the help of young visitors. In *Jump to Japan*, the re-created places were a fantasy world from the anime film, *My Neighbor Totoro* (Fig. 3-7 A and B).

Fig. 3-6 A. Peach tree (left). B. Banquet table (right). Both were recognizable settings mingled with fantasy elements, and both allowed young visitors to participate in Monkey's mischief.

Fig. 3-7 A. A recreated scene from *My Neighbor Totoro* (left). B. Cat Bus from *My Neighbor Totoro* (right). Both exhibits were in *Jump to Japan*.

Contextual Components

Sometimes the contextual settings were enough to inspire children's play, but more often children played with exhibit elements embedded in the staged settings. Contextual components included tools of daily living, clothing, creative play, music, computers, and language elements. For instance, various *Initiative* exhibitions included baby dolls (Fig. 3-2 A), fruits and vegetables (Fig. 3-4), and fishing nets (Fig. 3-5 A) that children could incorporate into role-playing within that setting or culture. Often these loose parts could move around the exhibitions, and children did move them as they played. Sometimes parts were moved in appropriate ways – fish from the boat to the market, fruit from the market to the kitchen – and sometimes they were not.

Role-playing within a culture is facilitated by implements of daily life, and many of the exhibits provided these tools. Examples included cooking utensils, prepared food, and a telephone (Fig. 3-8). Culturally appropriate clothing encouraged young visitors to role-play as well (Fig. 3-9). Besides loose components for play, visitors could just poke around in the recreated spaces and discover things about the residents' lives. For instance, in *Five Friends from Japan*, visitors could explore Japanese children's homes and classroom, opening drawers and backpacks to see what they could find (Fig. 3-10).

Most exhibitions included at least one interactive for writing numbers, letters, or words from that culture's language (Fig. 3-11). Other interactives helped children learn to read or understand words or names in the culture's language (Fig. 3-12).

A few exhibitions included things that visitors could make, like a drum in the drum workshop (Fig. 3-3 A, above), and an *anime*-themed video in *Jump to Japan* (Fig. 3-13). Many of the exhibitions allowed visitors to make their own music by playing musical instruments, or encouraged them to sing along to that culture's music (Fig. 3-14). In addition, many of the exhibitions included computers displayed in ways appropriate to the context (Fig. 3-15). Visitors could use these computers to find out more about the culture or to play computer games. Some exhibitions also included physical games that visitors could play (Fig. 3-16 A).

Story-telling exhibits engaged children in several ways. Visitors were often placed into scenes where they could role-play along with the story (Fig. 3-6 and 3-7, above). In addition, *Dragons and Fairies* told stories to visitors in a variety of interactive and multimedia ways (e.g., Fig. 3-17), and *Monkey King* encouraged visitors to re-tell events from the story in a variety of ways (Fig. 3-18).

Fig. 3-8. A. Cooking utensils in the *Five Friends* tofu shop (left). B. A traditional holiday meal served by children role-playing in *Japan and Nature* (center). C. A telephone for *Japan and Nature* visitors who would rather order their food delivered (left).

Fig. 3-9. A. Visitors could try on traditional Korean clothing in *Song of Korea* (left). B. Japanese clothing for visitors to wear as they play a drum and march in a festival parade in *Japan and Nature* (right).

Fig. 3-10. Discovering children's lives in *Five Friends from Japan*. A. A drawer with collections (left). B. Classroom desks with drawers to open and backpacks to explore (right).

Fig. 3-11. Writing in that culture's language. A. A simple chalkboard interactive in *Hmong at Heart* (left). B. Visitors could make Korean words with rubbings in *Song of Korea* (right).

Fig. 3-12. This interactive in *Dragons and Fairies* introduced visitors to Viet Namese children's names.

Fig. 3-13. Visitors could make their own videos at the Animation Stations in *Jump to Japan.*

Fig. 3-14. Musical interactives. A. Visitors could try out traditional musical instruments in *Dragons and Fairies* (left). B. This computerized exhibit in *Song of Korea* allowed visitors to record themselves singing along to Korean songs (right).

Fig. 3-15. Several of the exhibitions included computers with additional information about the culture. A. Internet Café in *Dragons and Fairies* (left). B. A classroom computer in *Song of Korea*, with a simulated Internet connection (right).

Fig. 3-16. Some *Initiative* exhibitions included games for visitors to play. A. A cooperation game in *Monkey King* required two players to complete the task (left). B. A traditional Japanese card-based game in *Jump to Japan* (right).

Fig. 3-17. *Dragons and Fairies* included many interactive and multimedia ways for visitors to hear a story told to them.

Fig. 3-18. In *Monkey King*, exhibits encouraged visitors to re-enact events from the Monkey King's story. A. Theater with cutouts of Monkey King characters (left). B. Magnet board with *Monkey King* cut-out characters (right).

The examples given above are some common types of contextual components that the seven Initiative exhibitions used to engage children in play and in learning about other cultures. Appendix A includes many other examples (plus larger versions of the photos shown above).

Recommendations for ACM

Develop a "cookbook" of proven exhibit techniques for engaging children with other cultures. This can be modeled after the *Exploratorium Cookbooks* or the *Cheapbooks* distributed by the Association of Science and Technology Centers. Each exhibit can be described and illustrated in detail, with advice about design, materials, labeling, procurement, and exhibit management. In addition, developmental frameworks and play/knowledge hierarchies could be applied to the exhibits, and the formative and summative evaluations discussed.

See the Executive Summary for a synthesis of all the recommendations from this report.

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Chapter 4:
LEARNING IN ASIAN EXHIBIT INITIATIVE EXHIBITIONS

Introduction

The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative (the *Initiative*) developed seven traveling exhibitions for children, each focusing on a single Asian culture. The exhibitions opened in early 2004, and each then traveled to at least 10 children's museums around the United States.[1, 2] As part of the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) commissioned a research study to assess the contributions of the *Initiative* to American children's understandings of Asian culture.[3] This chapter answers the primary research question of the study by describing the impacts of the *Initiative* on American children's understanding of Asian cultures.

Did Children Learn in the Exhibitions?

As documented by the summative evaluations and confirmed by Selinda's own field studies, children were learning in all seven *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions. Most children who spent time exploring the exhibitions expanded their understanding of an Asian culture in ways appropriate to their age and pre-existing knowledge about other cultures.

The various summative evaluation reports used a variety of methods to assess different aspects of learning. Hence, their findings are difficult to compare with one another. However, every study, in its own way, described positive results about children's learning. A broad picture of children's learning emerged as data from the studies were combined with the literature on learning in informal settings and Selinda's research findings. For instance, the *Song of Korea* evaluation found evidence that children learned about traditional Korean culture.

> *Evaluation data from this study suggest that the exhibition has successfully accomplished its desired outcomes to influence young visitors' understanding, perception, and appreciation of Korean culture….In most cases, the exhibition increased visitors' awareness of the traditional aspects of Korean life, which served to instill a deeper level of understanding of Korean culture in general (Song of Korea* summative report, Kessler, Hendrix, Stein, & Luke, p. ii*).*

In *Japan and Nature*, children learned about both subjects mentioned in the title – Japanese culture and the seasonal aspects of nature that play an important role in Japanese culture.

> *Exit interviews show that children were able to articulate aspects of Japanese culture that they learned from the exhibition with quite a few picking up on aspects of nature and the different seasons after visiting the exhibition (Japan & Nature* summative report, Wadman, 2004b, p. 25*).*

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[1] For a detailed overview of the *Initiative*, see the Introduction to this report.
[2] For a detailed description of each of the seven exhibitions, see Appendix A.
[3] For a description and overview of the research study, see Appendix B.

Dragons and Fairies used traditional stories and representations of modern Viet Namese life to stimulate children's interest in what was, for most, an unfamiliar culture, with encouraging results.

> *When interviewed, children … often communicated newfound understandings of the country of Viet Nam, its geographic location, language, or culture as a result of exploring the exhibition (Dragons and Fairies* summative report, Finamore, 2004, p. iv*).*

Jump to Japan had a more narrow focus on Japanese popular culture, yet many children were able to grow their understanding of other aspects of Japanese culture.

> *Popular culture served in this exhibition as an effective gateway to a foreign culture. Children already familiar with anime and manga gained an overall appreciation of Japan as a culture. Conversely, children already familiar with the general culture of Japan gained an appreciation for the art forms of anime and manga and used them as a way of broadening their understanding about Japan. We can infer from our data that the curiosity of both groups was piqued, either about Japanese culture in general or about the art of anime and manga (Jump to Japan* summative report, Beaumont, 2004, p. 21*).*

Children learned from their own observations of similarities and differences between their lives and the lives of people they were introduced to in the exhibitions, as in *Five Friends from Japan*.

> *Children perceived many similarities and differences between American and Japanese children. Such similarities and differences were typically factual observations based on the exhibition. Most personal characteristics ascribed to Japanese children are positive and non-stereotypical (Five Friends from Japan* summative report, Hayward & Warner, 2004, p. 18*).*

And children often remembered what they learned. For instance, the *Monkey King* evaluation investigated children's recall in the weeks after their visit. It found that children remembered things they had seen and done in the exhibition, and they sometimes followed up on interests that were piqued during their visits.

> *In follow up interviews, children exhibited a high recall for the very features of the exhibit they were most drawn to during their visit. All follow-up interviewees reported having thought about or recalled the exhibit since their visit…Many of them had also sought out further information about China or Chinese culture, particularly in the form of books (Monkey King* summative report, BLiP research, 2004a, p. 4*).*

In *Hmong at Heart*, children's learning also helped them achieve new levels of understanding, especially when their experiences were mediated by adults.

> *It was clear that the exhibit was successful at triggering the participants' movement through developmental[ly] appropriate stages that lead to an appreciation of another culture. Scaffolding was found to be crucial in learning culture through the elements of facilitating and providing a safe place for children to express and "reflect on" what they learned (Hmong at Heart* summative report, Coleman & Yang, 2004, p. 3*).*

It is clear from the evaluation summaries that children learned about the Asian cultures in a variety of ways: their curiosity was piqued; they made their own factual observations of Asian children portrayed in the exhibitions; they developed their understanding, appreciation, and perceptions of Asian cultures; and they later recalled what they had seen and done in the exhibitions.

However, the summative evaluations found that some children were not learning in ways that the exhibition teams had hoped, or that some were misunderstanding the intentions of the exhibitions. It is also important to understand where and why children did not learn, so that future exhibitions can take advantage of these findings.

This chapter looks closely at the many types of learning that took place in the *Initiative* exhibitions, examining both what children learned and what they did not learn in the seven exhibitions. Chapter 5, "Contributors to Children's Learning in Cultural Exhibitions," deals with the most important factors that shaped what children learned – and did not learn – within the exhibitions. Both chapters include recommendations that should help developers of future exhibitions build on what has been learned from the evaluations and research undertaken as part of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative*.

What Counts as Learning in Children's Museums?

Over the past decade, museum researchers and evaluators have broadened our understanding of the learning that takes place in children's museums and other informal settings (Gyllenhaal, 2004). For instance, Barbara Butler and Beverly Serrell reframed Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives developed for schools in terms more appropriate for informal settings. They re-conceptualized the traditional cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains into less formal terms, as "Think, Feel, and Do" (Butler, 2002; Butler & Serrell, 2001).

Although the learning-domain approach is an important way to frame learning (especially in the context of schools), museum evaluators and researchers have found the traditional domains inadequate to describe what they see happening in museums. Important types of learning do not seem to be described by the learning-domain approach. Authors who have developed alternative ways to think about learning include Mike Spock, Deborah Perry, and their co-workers at the *Informal Learning Program*, who completed a retrospective study of stories in which museum professionals described pivotal, memorable museum learning experiences in their own lives. Their results defined several previously neglected types of learning associated with museums (e.g., Perry, 2002). John Falk, Lynn Dierking, and their co-workers also developed a system that describes learning outcomes in the context of interactive exhibits (e.g., Falk, Scott, Dierking, Rennie, & Cohen-Jones, 2004). In addition, Steve Bitgood (1990) and Deborah Perry (2002) both described ways to think about the experiential learning that takes place in immersive exhibitions. Ted Ansbacher (2002) took things a step further when he claimed that progress in understanding what visitors take away from museum experiences "is being limited by our language, that *learning*—the word itself—has become an obstacle" (p. 4). As an alternative, he proposed seven possible outcomes of museum experiences; most of them do not include reference to learning as such. (See Gyllenhaal, 2004, for a more complete description of these learning types.)

For the purposes of this report, 10 types of learning were identified that were useful in describing the broad array of learning that took place in the *Initiative* exhibitions. The section below provides specific examples drawn from evaluation and research studies of the seven exhibitions. The 10 types of learning are summarized in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1
Types of learning observed in *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions.

Becoming Aware. Newfound awareness opens up the possibility of learning more about an unfamiliar culture.
Sparking an Interest. Museum experiences can spark an interest in something the visitor previously had little interest in, or knew nothing about.
Learning Skills. In cultural exhibitions, imitating a behavior or practicing with tools and activities of daily living gives visitors a sense of what it is like to be a member of another culture and can be a gateway to further learning.
Visceral Learning. Visceral learning is a "gut feeling" that has little to do with intellect or cognition. In cultural exhibitions, visceral learning expands children's physical understanding of what life is like within that culture.
Knowing and Understanding. Levels of competence indicate increased knowledge and understanding: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. Exhibitions can also counteract visitors' misunderstandings about other cultures.
Social Learning. Visitors learn about other members of their groups, or, in cultural exhibitions, visitors may engage in social learning about the people portrayed in the exhibits.
Learning Stories. Visitors learn about characters and events portrayed in folktales or true stories told in exhibitions, often discovering cultural or personal meanings within the stories.
Feelings and Attitudes. Visitors respond with a range of emotions, such as values, feelings, appreciation, and attitudes, to their experiences in an exhibition.
Remembering **Experiences. Visitors form robust memories of immersive** experiences that can be relived internally, reenacted through play, and discussed later with family and friends.
Delayed Learning. Visitors may continue to learn long after they leave the exhibition as they remember and process their experiences.

What Did Children Learn in *Initiative* Exhibitions?

Becoming Aware

As Falk et al. (2004) described, newfound awareness opens up the possibility of learning about something new. Given the large numbers of toddlers and preschoolers who visited the exhibitions, it was not surprising that many young visitors were unaware that there were other places, called "countries," with names like Japan and China, in a faraway place called Asia. Since many other Americans also know little about Viet Namese, Korean, or Hmong cultures, awareness of these new cultures was a common learning outcome for older children and even adult visitors to *Initiative* exhibitions.

Younger visitors also developed awareness of some even bigger concepts, like the idea that there were faraway places, different than their homes, where the people looked and acted differently as well. Caregivers of two- and three-year olds sometimes told them the name of the country they were exploring; other caregivers just told them it was another country, far away, without giving it a name. As children continued to explore, they became aware that these people had food,

clothing, music, and other things that were familiar, but also different in interesting (or puzzling) ways. Because their caregivers knew and cared about these places, people, and things, they seemed interesting, important, and worth investigating.

Older children already understood that there was a faraway place called Asia, but they often became aware that there was more to learn – that there were new places and peoples within Asia to explore. For those who knew only about China or Japan, discovering the lives of Viet Namese, Korean, or the Hmong people was a significant outcome. Many older children and adults became aware of an entire culture – the Hmong – for the first time in their lives.

Achieving awareness was a critical accomplishment for the *Initiative* exhibitions, because awareness, nurtured, leads to curiosity and the desire to explore.

Sparking an Interest

Museum experiences can spark a visitor's interest in something unknown, or of little previous interest (e.g., Ansbacher, 2002; Perry, 2002; Falk et al., 2004). Perry cited instances of interests sparked through museum experiences that developed into lifelong hobbies or careers. Most of the summative evaluations found evidence that a visit to an *Initiative* exhibition piqued the curiosity of young visitors.

> *Following their viewing [of* Monkey King*], many children expressed a desire to learn more about elements of Chinese culture to which they were exposed in the exhibit (*BLiP research, 2004b*).*

> *Respondents cited a variety of components for piquing their curiosity or surprising them. Among those commonly mentioned in this regard were the Folktale Theaters, the yokes, Zodiac Rubbing,* What's in a Name?*, and the* What's in the Bag? *Activities (Dragons and Fairies* summative report, Finamore, 2004, p. 20*).*

Interest and curiosity helped drive children's explorations of the exhibitions. As with *delayed learning*, children's curiosity sometimes persisted long after their visits. By sparking interests, museums can share credit for learning that visitors undertake far removed from their initial museum experiences.

Learning Skills and More

Butler (2002) adapted the traditional *psychomotor domain* to informal settings, emphasizing the role of imitation in progressively developing skills. She defined the following levels of competence: *imitation, manipulation, precision, articulation*, and *naturalization*. Children did indeed learn by imitating others in their group, or by studying photos and working along with videos that showed them what to do. By watching, trying out, and practicing, children explored the lower levels of competence within an Asian culture. Practicing with the tools and activities of daily living was children's primary activity in most *Initiative* exhibitions. Children built and played a Korean drum, wrote Japanese letters on an electronic tablet, caught fish from a Viet Namese boat, processed rice in a traditional Hmong village, prepared and ate a Japanese meal, and practiced Chinese martial arts. These children were *learning skills* and more as they interacted with the exhibits.

Practicing a skill can be a gateway to further learning in a cultural exhibition. As children watched, imitated, and practiced the skills of daily life, they became aware that there were tools and procedures, such as a special way to order food, or particular tools to catch fish that fit that culture. By trying out the tool or activity, they also discovered what it accomplished. Children learned words related to the tool or activity, such as the

names for the tool itself and for what it produced. Older children sometimes picked up information about when, where, and by whom the tool is used and how it fit within the culture. They also made comparisons with their own culture, where similar ends were accomplished in different ways. And children sometimes learned details about the design and construction of the items used for the activity – why Japanese windsocks look like carp, what sushi is made of, why the fishing poles were made of bamboo, and so forth.

By watching children undertake the skills of daily life in another culture, it became clear that there was a hierarchy for what they experienced. For example, what adults might call a tool or a product, for babies and the youngest toddlers was just another shape to be explored with eyes, hands, and mouth. They learned what babies always learn from interacting in this way from the world, regardless of where they explore. Older toddlers and preschoolers arrived with what seemed, in comparison, to be a wealth of knowledge about their own worlds. They recognized a drum, net, or pot as something they had seen before and knew something about. But as they explored and practiced with these tools, they did not think about the culture that made and used it – they learned about the tool independent of its culture of origin. Older children recognized and focused on how this tool differed from the ones they knew from their own lives. Some children only recognized the tools as belonging to "another country" or "the other people," but others realized that the tools were specific to a place called "Japan" or "Korea." As they practiced, they expanded their physical understanding of what life is like within that culture. Hierarchical approaches to describing learning are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, "Considering Child Development When Designing Cultural Exhibitions."

Visceral Learning

Of course, improving performance with an unfamiliar tool or activity was peripheral to the point of the *Initiative* exhibitions. It was really more about discovering what it felt like to participate in the focus culture. By using the tools and doing the activities of daily living, children learned what it felt and sounded like to be a member of that culture. This is what some researchers have called *visceral learning* or *physical knowledge*. Perry (2002) defined *visceral learning* as "learning which is located inside the body: It's a gut feeling, an internal understanding, a way of knowing that has little to do with intellect or cognition" (p. 23). Ansbacher (2002) called this *physical knowledge* and said it "does not involve conscious processing, but the idea of physical knowledge goes further to include acquiring an intuitive understanding—a 'gut feeling'—about some aspect of the world and the way it works" (p. 4). In the case of learning a skill, the physical or visceral component is an important aspect of the progressive development of skills, toward precision and naturalization.

Knowing and Understanding

The traditional *cognitive domain* of learning includes knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. Butler (2002) subdivided this domain into the following hierarchy or levels of competence: *remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate*, and *create*.

For instance, in *Five Friends from Japan*, children made their own factual observations during their explorations of the exhibitions, remembered the things they did in the exhibitions, and processed that information in various ways (Hayward & Warner, 2004). Some children walked away with just a few isolated, often stereotypical ideas, about life in Japan (like taking off your shoes and sitting on floor). Other children collected facts about what it is like to be a child in Japan – what school is like, what various Japanese homes are like, and so forth. These facts were important because they helped American children develop their internalized model of what it's like to be a Japanese child. Comparisons came naturally to older children – in these ways these Japanese

children are like *me*, in these ways they are different. Children also made comparative observations among the five friends, recognizing that some children are more like me than others, because they share *my* interests and have/do things that *I* enjoy, or do not. Finally, children's perceptions of Japanese children were shaped by the exhibition in ways that ran counter to typical American stereotypes. The American children found out that Japanese children don't go to school all the time, are not necessarily good students, eat more than just sushi, and live lives that include many activities that American children also enjoy. Life in Japan is not all traditional Japanese culture, and the children who live there are different, unique people (Hayward & Warner, 2004; Ringel, 2005).

Note that this range of cognitive activities cited in Hayward & Warner (2004) matches some of Butler's (2002) subdivisions of the cognitive domain. Children observed and remembered facts about Japanese children's lives, analyzed by comparison with their own lives, understood that there were differences and similarities, and then evaluated some of their preconceptions about what Japanese children are like.

Similar types of cognitive learning took place in other *Initiative* exhibitions.

> *Most children said that they learned about Japanese culture in some way, such as how they eat or write and many said that they learned something about nature in Japan such as different animals in Japan (Japan & Nature* executive summary, Wadman, 2004a, p. 4*).*

Young visitors made comparisons between what they saw in *Initiative* exhibitions and their own lives, and they sometimes identified with what they learned about the Asian cultures.

> *Many children were able to articulate differences between Japanese culture and their own by pointing out that Japanese people did certain things differently than Americans such as eating different food and how they eat or Japanese writing. Many children could also describe similarities between Japanese culture and their own through objects in the exhibition. A majority of children said that there was something in the exhibition that reminded them of something at home or at school (Japan & Nature* summative report, Wadman, 2004b, p. 29*).*

> *While traditional aspects of Korean culture resonated with visitors, the modern music and dance featured in the Norebang video provided a clear connection for many between American and Korean culture. However, it was clearly the cultural differences that appealed to most visitors. This outcome may very well be an indication of visitors' interest in Korean culture. While similarities are important in creating a level of familiarity, comfort, and understanding in the Song of Korea exhibition, it was clearly the differences that visitors learned from the most (Song of Korea* summative report, Kessler, Hendrix, Stein, & Luke, p. 25*).*

Five Friends was specifically designed to encourage visitors to evaluate their own stereotypes about Japanese children (Ringel, 2005), and it succeeded at the goal with most young visitors.

> *Most children were able to see meaningful differences among the "five friends," perceiving them as individuals rather than a homogenous "other." Although most children observed differences in terms of interests and activities, others engaged with individual "friends" because of their personal qualities (*Hayward & Warner, 2004, p. 1*).*

Interestingly, the exhibition was more successful with children than adults.

> *[Compared with children] the exhibition is somewhat less successful in helping adults see Japanese children as individuals; about half of adults described Japanese children as "mostly similar" rather than "very different from each other" (*Hayward & Warner, 2004, p. 1*).*

However, this was only a matter of degree.

> *This exhibition increased the likelihood that adults see Japanese children as individuals. Adults who have seen the exhibition (compared with a separate sample of adults who had not yet seen* Five Friends from Japan*) are less likely to think all Japanese schoolchildren wear uniforms, are more likely to think of their lives as modern rather than traditional, and somewhat less likely to think their lives are dominated by "lots of homework" (*Hayward & Warner, 2004, p. 2*).*

It is clear that, with concerted effort, cultural exhibitions can have a positive impact on American's misperceptions of other cultures.

However, even if children accumulated mostly factual knowledge about the Asian cultures (and didn't reconsider their opinions), this still represented new and important contributions to these children's understanding about Asian cultures. Evaluation findings indicated that many children entered the exhibitions with little or no understanding of the focus cultures.

> *Overall* Japan & Nature *did reach an audience not familiar with Japanese culture or those only minimally exposed through Japanese food. Almost three-quarters of adults reported that their children were not familiar with Japan or Japanese culture at all before visiting* Japan & Nature *indicating that the exhibition did indeed reach an audience not familiar with Japanese culture. Approximately one third said that their children were familiar only with Japanese food before visiting (Japan & Nature* summative report, Wadman, 2004a, p. 4*).*

Results showed that they left the exhibitions with better understandings of the focus cultures.

> *Findings suggested that the* Song of Korea *exhibition affected positive change in children's understanding of Korean culture. After their exhibition experience, visitors demonstrated a greater range of vocabulary with which to discuss the topic of Korean life. An unexpected finding was that the exhibition appeared to broaden visitors' thinking on the topic of Korean life….While children entered the exhibition with a focused range of concepts both related and unrelated to Korean culture, children emerged from the exhibition with a broader range of concepts focused on Korean life. This may be due in part to the developmental stage of these young children or a function of novelty (Song of Korea* summative report, Kessler, Hendrix, Stein, & Luke, p. 25*).*

Social Learning

Falk et al. (2004) defined *social learning* as visitors discovering something about other members of their groups in ways that may or may not be directly related to the subject matter and themes of the exhibition. In cultural exhibitions, visitors also engaged in social learning about the people portrayed in the exhibits, including individuals that were the focus of particular components. Quotes used to illustrate this type of learning included, "I never realized how much my dad knew about issues related to transportation," and "We were learning from each other, and I continue to discuss it with my son" (p. 181).

Indeed, there were many indications that visitors learned about others in their groups. For instance, children learned about their caregivers as adults described their experiences traveling in Asian countries, told stories about serving in the military, or discussed their preferences in Asian foods. Also, parents learned how much their children knew about Asian countries as young visitors shared what they had learned in school, martial arts classes, or through their interests in *anime* and *manga*. In other cases, parents discovered that their children still had much to learn about other cultures.

Another type of social learning also took place in several *Initiative* exhibitions. The

exhibitions personalized the experience by focusing on individual children from that culture. In *Song of Korea*, cutouts of Korean children greeted visitors as they entered various rooms in the exhibition, *Dragons and Fairies* included a video showing a daily life of a young girl, and *Five Friends from Japan* introduced visitors to both the school and home lives of Japanese children. This more personalized approach seemed to result in social learning of a different sort – learning about a person you had never met before, rather than a member of your group. Although this strategy was successful in *Five Friends from Japan*, its effectiveness was somewhat limited by the children's developmental levels.

> *Some children were able to develop an affinity for the "five friends" because of who they are whereas other children were most interested in their activities and possessions. For example, one child would like to be friends with Shoko because "She is nice and funny" and another child would like to be friends with her because "She plays the piano." One child would like to be friends with Ken because "He has things in common with me," whereas another child explained "I like that writing thing." (*Hayward & Warner, 2004, p. 23*).*

Younger children expressed their likes and dislikes about relatively superficial things, yet they still recognized the important points – Japanese children are not all alike, and some may be a lot like you.

How real is learning about a person you "met" only third-hand, through an exhibition? When some of the Japanese children portrayed in *Five Friends* attended the exhibition opening in Boston, they were greeted as friends – and almost mobbed – by American children who had just learned about their lives by visiting the exhibition.

Learning a Story

This category of learning is based on research and evaluation findings from the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* rather than the literature on informal learning. Research indicates that stories can play an important role in children's learning in museums. Anderson, Piscitelli, Weier, Everett, & Tayler (2002) observed and interviewed four- to six-year-old children during and after multiple visits to a range of museums. Among other things, they found that "children frequently recalled, and described in detail, museum experiences that were embedded in the medium of a story" (p. 222), in part because "the experience of hearing stories, either read from books or told by adult caregivers would be a very common, familiar, and enjoyable part of a child's everyday culture" (p. 223).

Folktales were included as prominent parts of some exhibitions. Visitors learned about the characters and events portrayed in these stories to varying degrees, and many also discovered meanings in the stories – either about what the story represented of the Asian culture portrayed, or how the story resonated personally. For instance, *Dragons and Fairies* included a number of stations depicting traditional Viet Namese folktales, some using audio and visual effects, and others read by visitors. According to the summative evaluation,

> *Visitors spending time in the folktale theaters enjoyed the stories and often could retell them, at least in part….Visitors were able to articulate key points and, at least in part, recount plots and characters in each story (Finamore, 2004, p. 10-11).*

Both children and adults developed deeper cultural understandings based on the stories in this exhibition.

> *Respondents who took the time to experience one or more of the [folktale theaters] seemed to take away the key content message: That these stories represent the Viet Namese people's beliefs regarding their heritage and traditions (*Finamore, 2004, p. 11*).*

The *Monkey King* took storytelling a step further because the whole exhibition was designed as a large-scale retelling of this traditional Chinese story. This approach was more challenging for children, who picked up bits of the story more or less in passing and whose understanding of the story often focused on the major character.

> *Of all the characters presented in the exhibit, children had the greatest recall for Monkey/Monkey King. Children had limited recall of the other characters featured in the exhibit…Children seemed to derive narrative content piecemeal, and almost solely from their favored exhibition components* (BLiP research, 2004b, slide 21).

Hence, children's understanding of the story was somewhat limited.

> *Based on their narrow understanding of the Monkey King narrative, children tended to reduce the story to a superhero-like battle between good and evil. In this struggle, Monkey was seen as "good" and "heroic," and his only known antagonist was the Bull Demon. Further gradations regarding Monkey's character were mainly lacking…. An understanding of the personalities of, or connections between, other characters was extremely limited to non-existent* (BLiP research, 2004b, slide 23).

In part because adults did significantly more reading of wall labels, they understood much more about the story.

> *[Parents] had a significantly deeper understanding of the themes of the narrative. They generally saw these as revolving around ideas of cooperation* (BLiP research, 2004b, slide 24).

Unfortunately, the summative evaluations indicate that most caregivers did not share much of this knowledge with their children.

Feelings and Attitudes

Butler & Serrell (2001) adapted the traditional *affective domain* to informal settings, describing a range of emotional aspects of learning, such as *values, feelings, appreciation*, and *attitudes*. Visitors to *Initiative* exhibitions responded emotionally, either to what they saw in the exhibitions, which visitors often described as beautiful, fun, meaningful, etc., or to the cultures portrayed in the exhibitions. When these feelings developed within the exhibitions, they represented another aspect of learning, which falls within the traditional *affective domain*.

Some of the best descriptions of affective learning come from the *Five Friends from Japan* evaluation. Most children developed very positive feelings toward the five Japanese children portrayed in the exhibition.

> *Almost all of the children (90%) said they would like to be friends with one or more of the "five friends"….Most of the children who identified an individual "friend" were able to express a reason for their choice. Furthermore, their descriptions of Japanese children in general are almost exclusively positive and mostly non-stereotypical* (Hayward & Warner, 2004, p. 2).

Children also expressed their less positive feelings about various aspects of the focus cultures, some of which they brought with them to the exhibitions. For instance, some children expressed their distaste for sushi or other types of Asian food.

However, the evaluations more often described visitors developing an appreciation for what had been an unfamiliar culture, a clearly positive outcome.

> *The* Song of Korea *exhibition proved to be a culturally stimulating experience for visitors at the time when they saw it as well as a few months afterwards….Attitudes and perceptions of Korea, its people and customs were positively received and will,*

no doubt, remain with young visitors as they grow and learn about the world (Song of Korea summative report, Kessler, Hendrix, Stein, & Luke, p. 26*).*

Remembering Experiences

Ansbacher (2002) cited evidence that "An exhibit that is engaging or impressive may yield an experience that will be retained in memory — added to the 'experience bank' —yet not be processed by the visitor. Such experiences may lie dormant forever, or they may be recalled and processed at a later time when triggered by new experiences" (p. 4). Other researchers have looked more closely at the retention of *multi-sensory memories of immersive experiences*. Bitgood (1990) pointed out that "learning associated with immersion is more experience-driven than information-driven. Instead of emphasizing the acquisition of facts, concepts, etc., a more pervasive understanding of the subject is sought—one that includes the feelings of experiencing another time and/or place, curiosity, excitement, etc." (p. 5). Perry (2002) defined *wrap-around learning*: "Wrap-around learning is learning that you feel with your whole body and via all your senses; learning that you can wrap your arms around" (p. 24). This sort of learning was also characterized as "gut-level understanding" that develops through the senses in immersive exhibits such as walk-though caves, walk-through hearts, and dioramas. When evaluators and researchers talked with children about the *Initiative* exhibitions, they often heard vivid, detailed descriptions of what the children had seen and done. Even a few weeks after the experience, many children still had much to say, as captured in the follow-up interviews for *Monkey King*.

*Follow-up interviews with a random selection of attendees 1-2 weeks after their visit revealed that children had a significant recall of the same aspects of the exhibit they connected with during their initial visit. [They recalled] The character of Monkey, Monkey stealing the Jade Emperor's peaches, the battles between Monkey and Bull Demon, the fact that the exhibit was set in China, [and] the idea of Monkey fighting to defeat evil (*BLiP research, 2004b*).*

Although none of the summative evaluations focused on this aspect of learning, the reports present ample evidence that children formed robust memories of their experiences. Scenes and events from their visits lived on in the children's memories, where they could be relived and discussed with their parents as the opportunity arose. That leaves open the possibility for the final type of learning discussed in this report.

Delayed Learning.

When visitors draw on their museum experience banks sometime after their museum visit, *delayed learning* can occur. As Perry (2002) described, "Delayed learning takes place over long periods of time, often unbeknownst to the learner, and only becomes obvious many months or often years after the initial experience" (p. 23). In a children's museum context, delayed learning becomes even more important when one realizes the frequency with which parents have been observed drawing on shared experiences while exploring museum experiences with their children. It is reasonable to assume that these parents would behave similarly away from museums by helping their children recall museum experiences as they try to make sense of other aspects of their world.

Several of the summative evaluation studies contacted visitors in the weeks and months after they visited the *Initiative* exhibitions. When one considers the possibilities for delayed learning, findings like this take on new meaning.

Telephone interviews conducted two to three months after visitors had experienced the exhibition suggest that it had been a memorable experience for visitors. Nearly half of all visitors interviewed by telephone indicated that they had talked with family or friends about the exhibition (Song of Korea summative report, Kessler, Hendrix, Stein, & Luke, p. 26*).*

> *All children involved in the follow-up interviews reported thinking about the exhibit after their visit….A number of children (and their parents) also noted that they were compelled to seek out more information about China following their visit, mainly through books (Monkey King* summative report, BLiP research, 2004b*).*

It is also important to note that host museums visited by the research team usually had stocked their gift shops with a shelf or two of merchandise related to the topics and themes of their *Initiative* exhibition.

> *Anecdotally, sales of* Monkey King *paraphernalia – especially books and videos – have been very strong at the [Museum] gift store (*BLiP research, 2004b*).*

When visitors take home something related to the exhibition, the possibilities for delayed learning increase.

Less Successful Aspects of Children's Learning

As noted earlier, there were indications that some children were not learning in ways that the exhibition teams had hoped, and that some children misunderstood the intended messages of the exhibitions. This section looks at ways in which the *Initiative* exhibitions were less successful at helping children learn about Asian cultures.

Please note that some of the summative evaluations looked more closely at children's misunderstandings than others; therefore, most of the examples included here are drawn from those studies. The over-representation of some exhibitions in this section is based on the focus of their evaluation reports rather than the effectiveness of the exhibitions.

Misunderstanding the Place

Figuring out what place and people were represented was a challenge for many visitors to *Initiative* exhibitions. Some children – and even some adults – failed to recognize what country the exhibition was about, or sometimes even that the exhibition was set in a particular place. Children most often misinterpreted the Japanese, Korean, Hmong, or Viet Namese exhibitions to be about China. For instance, in *Five Friends from Japan* about 15% of 167 child respondents confused Japan with another country, primarily China (Hayward & Warner, 2004). The *Monkey King* exhibition suffered similar problems, although to a lesser degree. Although almost 80% of the 46 children surveyed correctly stated that the exhibition was set in China, 13% could not say where it was set, and 4% said it was set in Japan (Wadman, 2004b).

We also noted that adults made similar mistakes, often in unguarded moments or when confronted with chopsticks in an exhibition that was not about China. Parents, floor staff, museum directors, and even this report's authors have misidentified – even if only momentarily – an exhibition as Chinese. In addition, many adult visitors had trouble identifying the location and culture of *Hmong at Heart*, mostly because this culture was unfamiliar to most visitors.

Several evaluation studies investigated why certain visitors were more apt to misidentify the country portrayed in the exhibition. In *Jump to Japan*, younger children seemed more likely to make this mistake.

> *The strongest [examples of this] misconception came from children from the youngest part of the target age range, those under age 6. Many of these younger visitors confuse Japan with China (*Beaumont, 2004, p. 10*).*

In *Dragons and Fairies*, children exploring the exhibition with little help from their caregivers were more prone to misunderstand its setting.

> *Those visitors most likely to make this erroneous assumption were children experiencing the gallery with no adult facilitation and, therefore, left to their own interpretations of exhibit content* (Finamore, 2004, p.vi).

In *Five Friends from Japan*, the characteristics of the caregivers seemed to play a role in children's recognizing the setting of the exhibition.

> *The education level and gender of the accompanying, interviewed adult had some association with children's ability to identify Japan in this exhibit. More children with men and more educated adults recognized that the exhibit setting is Japan* (Hayward & Warner, 2004, p. 19).

Some of these factors are beyond the control of exhibition developers. Children's museum exhibitions will always attract large numbers of younger children, and most museums strive to attract families of diverse education backgrounds. The question becomes, what can exhibition developers do to help more children (and their adults) recognize the country and people that are the focus of a cultural exhibition? This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5. Meanwhile, here is a useful perspective from the summative evaluation for *Jump to Japan*.

> *We can expect that as children get older and are exposed to other Asian cultures, this Asian/Chinese confusion will clear up. Exhibitions such as Jump to Japan are part of an important effort to introduce children to aspects of Asian culture that are uniquely Japanese* (Beaumont, 2004, p. 11).

Misunderstanding the Time Frame

Each Initiative exhibition, in its own way, dealt with issues related to past and present and the passage of time. At two extremes, *Monkey King* was set in an imagined past, while *Five Friends from Japan* was set in a realistic present. *Hmong at Heart* told a true story that began decades ago and continues in the present. As a middle of the road approach, *Dragons and Fairies* included a mix of traditional folktales and modern settings of a marketplace and a motorcycle trip through a city. All of the *Initiative* exhibitions were faced with the challenge of helping children recognize the mix of traditional and modern elements in contemporary Asian culture.

Given their wide range of developmental levels, it was not surprising that many children had problems separating past from present and following threads of time through an exhibition. For instance, in some exhibitions the traditional aspects of a culture got most children's attention, in other exhibitions, contemporary culture won out. In *Song of Korea*, children focused on traditional culture, and in *Jump to Japan*, the modern *anime* exhibits got most of children's attention. Most children had trouble recognizing that traditional and modern could co-exist, and this led to misunderstandings about what life was like in that country today.

> *We found that few visitors recognized the key content message: that ancient and modern ways coexist in Viet Nam. Many of our respondents, however, seemed to believe that life in Viet Nam is much more primitive than life in the United States, or that the exhibit was, in fact, about the history of the country, not the present (Dragons and Fairies* summative report, Finamore, 2004, p. 15).

The *Dragons and Fairies* evaluators developed a potential explanation for this problem.

> *We believe that this misconception came about due to the lack of overt references to modern Viet Nam within the exhibition. To the visitors with whom we spoke, everything looked and felt ancient or old compared to life in the United States, so they assumed that the exhibition was about history. Also, the inclusion of the phrase "Long Ago…" to the entrance areas of the folktale theaters also seemed to enhance the misperception that the exhibition, as a whole, was about the past (*Finamore, 2004, p. 15*).*

However, a deeper challenge may be the developmental limitations of children's comprehension of time-related concepts. This issue requires careful consideration during exhibition development.

Misunderstanding the People and Their Culture

Despite extensive efforts of the exhibition development teams, some children still walked out of *Initiative* exhibitions with stereotypes or misconceptions about the focus culture. Here is an example from the *Jump to Japan* summative evaluation.

> *We heard in our interviews other descriptions of ways that Japanese culture differs from U.S. culture, but, upon further questioning, we often found that children learned this information either in school or from friends. However, the exhibition did not seem to challenge most of their assumptions, some of which are pretty interesting and quite stereotypical. Here are some of those assumptions, as stated by children in our interviews:*
>
> - *Japanese people walk everywhere.*
> - *Japanese people attend more school than we do in the U.S.*
> - *Japanese people ride bicycles and don't have cars.*
> - *Japanese people are short.*
>
> *The literature on children's early understanding of culture confirms that these kinds of assumptions are not unusual (Richardson et al., 2002) (*Beaumont, 2004, p. 13*).*

As mentioned earlier, sometimes an Initiative exhibition inadvertently led children astray. For instance, some young visitors to *Dragons and Fairies* felt that contemporary life in Viet Nam must be very difficult because of their experiences with the yoke in the marketplace and the fishing boat. Other misconceptions developed, or persisted, despite an exhibition's efforts to deal with them. The following example was noted in *Jump to Japan*.

> *Another misconception, or unintended message, has to do with how images of the manga characters are perceived. For some children manga characters represent real Japanese people in their "look," or skin and hair color….We noted that label text in the* Manga Mania *area of the exhibition explains the reasons for depicting manga characters with light skin, large eyes, and, sometimes, blond hair. Children's understanding of this often depended on the adult caregivers explaining that text to the children, and in some cases we found that, until our interview, the adults were unaware that their children had this misconception (Jump to Japan* summative report, Beaumont, 2004, p. 11-12*).*

As described earlier, *Five Friends from Japan* was more successful at dealing with American's stereotypes of Japanese children; however, they did so by designing the entire exhibition to counter those stereotypes.

Conclusion

Understanding another culture is a long complex journey, with many potential routes. Because the journey begins early and can last a lifetime, the ability to assimilate cultural knowledge and develop accepting attitudes also grows and develops along the way. When children begin the journey, they cannot comprehend where they are going – is it any wonder they sometimes lose their way?

Fortunately most children don't walk alone on their journey to cultural understanding. For part of the way they are accompanied by their parents. Other adults – friends, relatives, teachers, floor staff and demonstrators at a museum – take them by the hand. Sometimes other children also guide them on their way. Everyone takes the journey in one way or another, and can arrive in very different places depending on their guides.

The best journeys of all never really end – both the traveler and the destination continue to grow and change. Cultural understanding is more than just an accumulation of facts and concepts. It is also built of multisensory experiences with tools and activities, attitudes and values, and impressions of people met along the way. The ability to make sense of all these aspects of culture continues to grow, as the culture itself changes over time.

The *Initiative* exhibitions demonstrate that children's museums can be important places on children's journeys to cultural understanding. Sometimes museums are a place to start; more often they are one of many stops along the way. This chapter has shown some of the many types of learning that can happen when children linger in developmentally appropriate exhibitions about Asian cultures, as well as some ways they may be led astray. The chapter closes with recommendations that may help developers of future exhibitions plan more stops along children's journeys. Chapter 5 includes more in-depth discussions of the factors that helped shape children's learning in *Initiative* exhibitions.

Recommendations

These recommendations are aimed at both individual exhibition development teams and the children's museum field as a whole.

Develop cultural learning goals for all ages of children. Children may have similar experiences in an exhibition, but the youngest children should be expected to exit with very different understandings than older children.

Develop model learning goals for the ten different types of learning described in this chapter. Children's museum exhibitions should inspire and support all types of learning described in this chapter.

Help caregivers guide their children to discover cultures at appropriate developmental levels. For instance, interpretation should model ways for caregivers to use the name of the country, culture, and people when talking to their children. When it is appropriate for caregivers to use unfamiliar names and words, pronunciation guides should be included throughout.

Chapter 5 includes more detailed recommendations for developing interactives, shaping children's role-playing, and assisting caregivers within cultural exhibitions.

See the Executive Summary for a synthesis of all the recommendations from this report.

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A complete list of references consulted during this study is included as Appendix D: Classified Bibliography.

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Chapter 6:
EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS

Introduction

The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative (the *Initiative*) developed seven traveling exhibitions for children, each focusing on a single Asian culture. The exhibitions opened in early 2004 and each then traveled to at least ten children's museums around the United States.[1,2] As part of the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) commissioned a research study to assess the contributions of the *Initiative* to American children's understandings of Asian culture.[3] This chapter examines the effects of the *Initiative* on the participating children's museums. Chapter 7, "Effects on the Children's Museum Field" discusses effects on the children's museum field as a whole.

Defining Terms

The children's museum field is composed of many related parts, including the hundreds of children's museums across the United State and the thousands of people who work in them. It also includes the many people and organizations who serve those museums in either the public or private sector, including the Association of Children's Museums. Beyond those people and organizations, the field includes the relationships that bind the museums and their staff to each other and to the ACM, plus the knowledge, philosophies, and goals that children's museum people and organizations hold in common.

The research indicated that the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* had a broad range of effects across the children's museum field. These effects will be described using a three-part classification for outcome evaluations and program logic models (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001). *Outputs* are the direct products of project activities, which in the case of the *Initiative* included the exhibitions themselves, marketing materials, cultural and artistic programs developed to support their *Initiative* exhibition, and more. *Outcomes* include changes in participants' behavior, knowledge, and skills. Earlier chapters looked at the *Initiative's* outcomes for visitors; this chapter looks at outcomes for children's museum staff. Finally, *impacts* are fundamental changes occurring in organizations, communities, or systems as a result of project activities. Note that impacts develop on a broader level, affecting organizations rather than individuals. Also, there is a difference in time span implied by these terms; although outputs and some outcomes develop fairly quickly after initiation of the project, impacts often taking years to develop (Kellogg Foundation, 2001).

This chapter looks at the outputs, short-term outcomes, and potential impacts of the *Initiative* at the level of individual children's museums and for the people who work there. Chapter 7 examines the broader and longer-term effects of the *Initiative* on the children's museum field.

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[1] For a detailed overview of the *Initiative*, see the Introduction to this report.
[2] For a detailed description of each of the seven exhibitions, see Appendix A.
[3] For a description and overview of the research study, see Appendix B.

The Host Museums

A wide range of museums hosted *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions. For instance, the 70-plus hosting museums varied greatly in size. Based on data from the host survey, the museums varied in terms of annual operating budget (Table C-3), staff size (Table C-4), and annual attendance (Table C-5).[4] Although most hosting museums were located in mid-sized or larger urban areas, some were located in suburban settings (Table C-6).

The host museums also had a range of previous experience with cultural exhibitions and programming. Although most had conducted programming related to other cultures, fewer had exhibits with cultural or multicultural themes, and a minority had their own exhibits related to Asian cultures (Table C-7). The host museums also had a broad range of experience with traveling exhibitions. At the inception of the *Initiative*, 41% of the host museums reported hosting two or more traveling exhibitions a year. However, 17% of the host museums said they had never hosted a traveling exhibition before, and another 20% said they hosted traveling exhibitions at most every two or three years (Association of Children's Museums, 2003). In particular, most museums reported that they had hosted cultural or multicultural exhibitions infrequently (Table C-8). Some host staff explained that this was, in part, due to the limited range of attractive cultural exhibitions available for rent. As one host staff member stated,

> *We are always looking for traveling exhibitions with multicultural themes, but very few of quality come across our desks.*

Outputs for Individual Museums

Obviously, the major outputs for producing museums included the seven exhibitions and the range of supporting materials that accompanied them. These supporting materials included exhibition installation and maintenance manuals, public relations materials, and educational materials developed by the producing museums to help guide and inspire programming at the host museums.[5] The producing museums also provided staff support to host museums, which sometimes included sending a staff member to assist with exhibition setup.

The host museums appreciated many aspects of the *Initiative's* exhibitions, not the least of which was the low cost to them, made possible by The Freeman Foundation.[6]

> *First and foremost, it enable[d] more children's museums to host such quality exhibits, which otherwise would not have been possible!*

> *[The] ACM relationship with a major donor provide[d] money for large museums to create exhibits and travel them to smaller museums that cannot work on this scale and level of sophistication – i.e. brings extremely high quality to smaller cities and more rural areas of the USA.*

Because both the development and distribution of the exhibitions were funded through ACM, the host museums portrayed the *Initiative* as "giving museums and their audiences an experience that they may not be able to provide on their own."

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[4] All tables are included in Appendix C.
[5] These materials are cited for each exhibition in Appendix A.
[6] The quotations in this chapter were selected from host surveys as examples of the *range* of ways in which respondents discussed the topic in question. However, the number of quotations does not represent the relative frequency or strength of a particular response.

Many outputs produced by the host museums were developed in direct response to the producing museum's work. For instance, the host museums each developed a plan for marketing their exhibition in their area based on publicity materials provided by the producing museums and the Association of Children's Museums. These efforts were partially funded by the $15,000 grant from ACM. The marketing plans included a balance of free publicity and paid advertising (Table C-9), usually based on models provided by the producing museums (Table C-10). The host museums developed creative marketing ideas to attract diverse audiences (Table C-11).

In addition, the host museums developed a wide variety of programming that took place during their *Initiative* exhibition. Most museums said they did more programming for their *Initiative* exhibition than for other traveling exhibitions they had hosted (Table C-12), usually building on model educational materials provided by the producing museum (Table C-13). Most museums conducted at least four or five of the many types of programs listed in Table C-14. Some sample program descriptions demonstrate the range of programming conducted by the host museums:

[We presented] Asian Culture Fest activities and programs, including "The Magic of the Monkey King" theatrical performances; Children's Museum floor programs ("Asian Adventures," "SuperSprouts: Monkey Stories," "Origami Game Show").

The Magic of the Monkey King *theatrical performances were presented solely because we had The Freeman [Foundation] traveling exhibit. It was a wonderful program and very successful.*

We held several extensive program day events: Tet; MidAutumn Festival; a Viet Namese Feast; a number of Arts and Craft days.

Every Saturday we had a person from our Korean community volunteer to do Korean craft/activity at the exhibit.

The following is a listing of the special programming activities that went on during the run of the exhibition at our museum: • Viet Namese paper folding demonstrations • Dragon Dance performances • Sampling of Viet Namese food • Viet Namese fashion shows • Origami demonstrations • Fan Dance performances.

*Anne Fadiman spoke (*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*).*

Our annual fund-raising event theme was Chinese Lunar New Year.

[We] showed anime films. In addition, we had an adult night (PG) anime film festival.

Also, some educational programming was developed specifically for schools.

[We] held a middle school and high school students' Japanese tea with games and some Japanese food.

[Our] education coordinator offered a Discovery Workshop *the month of April for school groups & community groups.*

We developed a teaching curriculum which required six teachers to move large groups through the exhibit.

[We] developed a 1/2 hour "Time Travel to China" field trip program for 1st-3rd grade, embracing state learning standards.

[We developed] an art project (batiking) to accompany field trip class visits.

The *Initiative* inspired many host museums to develop in-house exhibits to supplement or extend their Initiative exhibition, as shown by the following examples. Note that many involved contributions from the community and/or Asian American organizations.

> *We had several members of our community who donated their tea sets, dolls, fans, etc., that were offered for us to display. Another person offered a kimono, hats, and sandals for a mannequin window display.*

> *[We displayed a] photo exhibit from the* Japanese Gardens*, large framed photographs in the foyer and hallway leading to exhibit.*

> *[The museum] re-curated its* Origami as Architecture *exhibition to showcase traditional and new forms of origami and paper art.*

> *[A] kite exhibit was provided by the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center…. It consisted of 48 handmade kites from Japan.*

> *[We] also created a reading area in exhibit. [The] exhibition came with books. We purchased an area rug and floor pillows and added a donated rocking chair for adults and children to sit and read.*

> *We leveraged the exhibit to actually convert our entire museum to reinforce cultural studies around China….Our reading areas' books were switched out with books about China. The puzzles in the game areas were switched for puzzles from China as well… Our kitchen/café exhibit was given an Asian theme.*

The *Initiative* exhibitions, aided by the host museums' marketing and programming efforts, served about 3.5 million visitors at host museums during the four-year tour (Table C-15). Most hosting museums reported at least a slight increase in attendance over the same time period for the previous two years (Table C-15). This increase may be due in part to the *Initiative* exhibitions attracting a broader audience to the hosting museums, including more visitors of Asian descent and older children and adults (as noted in Chapter 1). However, the total attendance figures reveal that the *Initiative* had, at most, a negligible impact on overall attendance at children's museums (Table C-15), and a few host museums expressed disappointment that their *Initiative* exhibition did not increase attendance as much as they had hoped. Perhaps the children's museum field should expect that cultural exhibitions will increase the diversity of their audiences and achieve goals critical to their missions, but may not greatly increase the *numbers* of visitors they serve.

Outcomes for Children's Museum Staff

As noted earlier, the outcomes of a project include changes in participants' behavior, knowledge, and skills. Earlier chapters discussed outcomes for visitors; this section discusses outcomes for children's museum staff and volunteers.

Staff learning was a major outcome for most of the participating museums. For instance, in the process of preparing for the exhibition and associated programs, staff and volunteers learned about the culture portrayed in their *Initiative* exhibition.

> *We, as a staff, learned much about the Japanese culture. We worked for a long period of time, researching and testing ideas, connecting to community contacts, and made it a real priority.*

> *Staff got to learn about Japanese culture as programs, volunteers & exhibit staffing were developed.*

> *We all learned so much about the Hmong people.*

In addition, ACM funding allowed several museums to add temporary staff to extend their educational efforts.

> *[The grant from ACM] afforded us the opportunity to hire a knowledgeable Southeast Asian staff exhibit coordinator.*

> *[Asian] staff member in residence for 12 weeks brought new energy and expertise.*

Increased staff understanding and skills related to traveling exhibitions was also a major outcome of the *Initiative*.

> *The most significant impact that this exhibition had on our institution was that it was our first incoming traveling exhibit. This exhibit provided our staff, and volunteers [with] a variety of new experiences, from the intricacies of installing an exhibit such as this, to the staff and volunteer training…The museum staff learned a great deal about the considerations involved with installing a temporary exhibit, and we appreciated the opportunity to gain this new expertise.*

> *It gave us a better understanding of the measures of quality within the traveling exhibit world and also the complications that can arise from the use of technology.*

Many host museums – especially the smaller ones – paid a price for their increased knowledge of traveling exhibitions. Host museums experienced difficulties with preparing the exhibit space, unloading the trucks, setting up the exhibitions, storing the crates, maintaining the interactive and multimedia components, and packing up the exhibition for shipment to the next venue.

> *Logistics were difficult with a very small staff.*

> *The most challenging thing about hosting this exhibit was the installation. Although in the end we had a successful installation, the experience revealed our limitations to host this type of traveling exhibition.*

> *[The biggest challenge was] SET UP & TEAR DOWN & LOADING SEMI!!! The size and quantity of crates with no loading dock or inside staging area depended on weather since crates didn't fit in our building. It was too hard to load the semi.*

> *There were also challenging aspects around exhibit components that never worked. Some of the technology kiosks were difficult to hear and were not effective.*

The exhibit was larger and more technically complex than originally thought. This led to added expense and frustrations.

These experiences highlight the need for clear and accurate communication between producing and host museums about exhibition requirements and the limitations of host museum buildings. In addition, some smaller and first-time host museums did not accurately describe on their applications how their facility met the physical requirements of the exhibits. Nonetheless, some host staff said they saw the benefits of learning-by-doing traveling exhibitions.

We are a small organization and so making sure all the components were out and useable took a little effort…but it was worth it.

The size and scope of this project tested our abilities to the max. We rose to the challenges and were able to accomplish the goals and objectives we set for ourselves as a staff. The institution gained credibility in the community—we impressed many!

These increases in staff knowledge were, in turn, responsible for some of the larger impacts of the *Initiative* on the participating museums, as detailed in the following section.

Impacts on Children's Museums as Organizations

As noted earlier, impacts are fundamental and long-term changes occurring in organizations, communities, or systems as a result of project activities. Based on the available data, several major impacts may be developing at museums that produced or hosted the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions. However, because impacts develop over long time frames, we cannot be certain that they will continue to develop or last unless further study is done.

Building Relationships with the Asian American Community

For many museums, the most important impact of the *Initiative* was the development of new or stronger relationships between the hosting museums and their local Asian American communities. The museums expected to develop such relationships, and most were not disappointed.

We hoped to develop a relationship with the local Hmong community. Their enthusiastic participation exceeded our expectations.

The opportunity to build connections to the Chinese community exceeded expectations. The community was extremely thrilled with this opportunity and took full advantage.

These partnerships resulted in programming, additional exhibits, and funding opportunities for the host museums. However, not all host museums were able to develop these sorts of relationships.

Our expectation to create new connections within the community was not met as we expected. There are not any formal Japanese organizations in [our] area. Due to this, we collaborated with individuals in the community.

[Although we expected] strong sponsorship from the Asian community, we made great effort with no success.

It was not always clear why some museums were less successful, although it is possible these museums might have benefited from support and advice from some of the more successful museums.

In addition to developing relationships with the organized cultural community, some host museums also looked to their local Asian community for audience development.

Our museum has a strategic focus on increasing attendance from the Viet Namese community.

Asians are among the fastest growing ethnic groups [in our area]. The subject/topic offered the possibility of bringing in more Asian visitors than we usually get.

We viewed hosting the exhibit as an opportunity to reach out to local Viet Namese audiences.

Although most museums reported an increase in Asian visitors during the run of their *Initiative* exhibition, no post-exhibition data is available. Therefore, we cannot fully evaluate this potential impact on the hosting museums.

Building Capacity to Host Traveling Exhibitions

Respondents sometimes used the term *capacity building* when discussing host museum's experiences with the *Initiative* exhibitions. In the case of traveling exhibitions, building capacity means increasing staff abilities and expertise, and it affects a number of other factors including funding, developing appropriate spaces within the museum buildings, and more. Building traveling-exhibition capacity was particularly important to museums that had never hosted a traveling exhibition before, or had not hosted one for a long time. The *Initiative* gave them a low risk opportunity to see if this approach to exhibitry worked for their museum.

Our institution has not received a traveling exhibit for many years. It was an opportunity to test community interest and internal needs.

Opportunity to host a traveling exhibit was new to us…and was made affordable to us through Asian Exhibit Initiative.

Host museums developed many capacities through their *Initiative* experiences, including identifying new sources of funding.

It was important to identify new opportunities to partner with funders. It turned out to be an important new opportunity to work with a shopping center that is just opening, laying the foundation for a lasting relationship.

We expected that hosting a nationally traveling exhibit would raise our profile within the funding community, and we are pleased to report positive results. We added two new corporate funders and realized increased individual donations during [the exhibition's] run.

[The Initiative] helped develop our traveling exhibit hall while creating a partnership with [a sponsoring company].

Another important aspect of capacity cited by the host museums was the relationships developed between museum staff members as they shared the experience of hosting a traveling exhibition.

This was the largest project we ever mounted, and we met, as a staff, on a weekly basis for almost two years.

The whole process of installing and promoting the exhibition had a positive impact on team-working aspects [for] all departments in our museum.

It seems that team-building and staff relationships should be included as another aspect of the capacity building process. However, we need to caution once again that these data on capacity building were collected over a short timeframe. Enhanced capacity seems, at this point, to be an important impact for the participating museums, but only time will tell what the museums are able to do with their new capacities.

Building Capacity to Develop Cultural Exhibitions

Producing museums also gained a wealth of knowledge about developing cultural exhibitions for children. Here is a sample of what some had to say about this topic.

> *The* Asian Exhibit Initiative *helped [us] to refine techniques—using individual experiences and stories, genuine objects, and face to face encounters—that help visitors understand diverse cultures.*

> *[Our museum] has developed a new model and approach for presenting cultural exhibits, which staff is applying to another traveling exhibit now under development.*

> *For [our museum] one of the greatest outcomes of the Initiative has been the creation of a new model and developmental framework for planning cultural exhibits. [We have] built lasting connections to the [Asian] community, increased its capacity for developing traveling exhibits and have become a leader for outreach to the [target] community.*

Some host museums also talked about impacts the *Initiative* had on their plans for future exhibitions. For instance, some museums had never hosted cultural exhibitions before. They said they were using the *Initiative* as a way to expand into new subject areas.

> *[The* Initiative*] presented an excellent opportunity for us to expand beyond the usual natural history and science exhibitions*

> *[We] wanted to "experiment" with other types of exhibits than the ones we usually do.*

Others talked of their plans for building their own cultural exhibitions, listing ways in which their *Initiative* experience helped build their capacity to achieve that goal.

> *[This] fit with our mission and strategic plan. [It was a] chance to host a sophisticated cultural exhibit before building our own.*

> *Our expectation [was] that our staff would benefit from fresh exhibit techniques. We used [the exhibition] as a common reference in planning a new exhibit and reviewing interpretation techniques.*

> *[Our museum] has strong and extensive family programming, but no exhibition that is primarily oriented to families. We are planning to develop one, and [the exhibition] taught us useful lessons and demonstrated the success of such exhibits.*

> *[We have no permanent exhibitions devoted to Asian cultures] but you can be sure that this will change in our future thinking [and] strategic planning! It has already influenced programming.*

Again, this impact will be playing out over the next several years, and it will be interesting to see if the momentum that these museums developed during the Initiative will be maintained.

Some Remaining Opportunities

Looking over the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative*, it is clear that some aspects of the traveling exhibition process were more difficult than expected, such as some host museum's frustrations with the logistics of their *Initiative* exhibitions. Some host staff saw this as part of their own learning experience about traveling exhibitions. However, the researchers believe that ACM and the children's museum field now have enough accumulated knowledge to make traveling exhibitions a much less difficult experience for smaller and first-time host museums. Now seems like a good time to collect, organize, and distribute that knowledge.

Although most host museums successfully built relationships with their local or regional Asian American communities, others were less successful. Again, now is a good time to collect, organize, and disperse the field's growing knowledge about what works and what factors may hinder building these relationships.

Learning-by-doing was a successful strategy at many of the host museums, contributing to a range of positive outcomes for their staff. However, as ACM staff have pointed out, the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* was conceived and developed before the Internet's current wave of social networking technologies. The potential for these technologies to support staff learning-by-sharing should be exploited, including sharing ideas for marketing, programming, exhibit development, and evaluation.

Finally, some participating museums reported that they continue to, or plan to, develop their own cultural exhibitions. Therefore there is an opportunity for ACM and the producing museums to share their knowledge about the development and design of cultural exhibitions.

Recommendations for ACM

Develop a list of design and support criteria that make traveling exhibitions easier for small and first-time hosts. It is important that new host museums continue to learn-by-doing traveling exhibitions, but it should be possible to make improve the logistics of the process.

Future initiatives should focus more effort on opportunities for staff learning. In particular, use a variety of electronic means to provide training and support for staff at smaller and less-experienced museums.

Find ways to tap producing and host museums' knowledge about building relationships with their Asian American communities. Each host has a story to tell, and these should be gathered and organized in a way useful for other museums.

Provide support for children's museums that produce new exhibitions about other cultures, either for in-house or for travel. This includes developing mechanisms to share accumulated knowledge about the process of designing cultural exhibitions. The sessions at *InterActivity 2007* were a good starting point, but the field should establish more permanent resources available to museums when they need it most.

Continue to collect data from the participating museums. To better understand the long-term outcomes and impacts of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative*, the researchers suggest conducting follow-up staff interviews, and perhaps written surveys, at several points over the next two to five years.

See the Executive Summary for a synthesis of all the recommendations from this report.

References

The following references were cited in this chapter.

Association of Children's Museums. (2002). *Interest survey report*. Unpublished manuscript, Association of Children's Museums, Washington, DC.

W. K. Kellogg Foundation. (2001). *Using logic models to bring together planning, evaluation, & action: Logic model development guide*. Battle Creek, MI. Retrieved July 29, 2007: http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

A complete list of references consulted during this study is included as Appendix D: Classified Bibliography.

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Chapter 7: EFFECTS ON THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM FIELD

Introduction

The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative (the *Initiative*) developed seven traveling exhibitions for children, each focusing on a single Asian culture. The seven exhibitions opened in early 2004 and then traveled to at least ten children's museums around the United States.[1,2] As part of the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) commissioned a research study to assess the contributions of the *Initiative* to American children's understandings of Asian culture.[3] Chapter 6, "Effects on Individual Children's Museums" focused on effects on individual children's museums and their staffs. This chapter focuses on focuses on the effects of the *Initiative* on ACM and the children's museum field as a whole.

Defining Terms

As noted in Chapter 6, the research indicated that the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* had a broad range of effects across the children's museum field. This chapter looks at effects that go beyond the individual museums who participated in the *Initiative*, discussing ways in which the *Initiative* has affected, and may continue to affect, (a) children's museums and museum staff who did not directly participate in the *Initiative*, (b) the relationships among children's museums, (c) and the Association of Children's Museums.

As in Chapter 6, these effects will be described using a three-part classification: (a) *outputs*, the direct products of project activities, (b) *outcomes*, the changes in peoples' behavior, knowledge, and skills, and (c) *impacts*, broader and longer term changes occurring in organizations, communities, or systems (Kellogg Foundation, 2001).

Outputs for the Children's Museum Field

The most obvious outputs of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* have been the seven exhibitions, which were seen by about 3.4 million visitors at host museums during the four-year tour (Table C-15). The *Initiative* has changed the number of traveling exhibitions about culture, as well as ideas about what makes a good children's museum exhibition about culture. As host museum staff stated,[4]

> *It is amazing to have seven high quality exhibits about Asian culture on the market. We plan to rent some.*

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[1] For a detailed overview of the *Initiative*, see the Introduction to this report.
[2] For a detailed description of each of the seven exhibitions, see Appendix A.
[3] For a description and overview of the research study, see Appendix B.
[4] The quotations in this chapter were selected from host surveys as examples of the *range* of ways in which respondents discussed the topic in question. However, the number of quotations does not represent the relative frequency or strength of a particular response.

[The] quality of traveling exhibits has a new standard. Authenticity through use of real materials and credible advisors gave the exhibit a more professional quality than many have enjoyed earlier.

It raises the bar and sets a cultural benchmark for traveling cultural exhibits, while inspiring smaller institutions with the possibilities.

In addition, the *Initiative* exhibitions will continue to be displayed at children's museums and other venues at the conclusion of the current tour. In a phone survey conducted during October 2006, several of the producing museums said they had preliminary plans to travel their *Initiative* exhibitions to children's museums around the country (Association of Children's Museums, 2006). As of winter 2008, several *Initiative* exhibitions were soliciting additional bookings using the ACM *Exhibits Marketplace* website. All the exhibitions may be available for a national tour pending additional funding. Both the ACM and producing museums reported that dozens of museums had expressed interest in hosting *Initiative* exhibitions in 2008 and beyond. Also, two producing museums said they planned to circulate their exhibitions to libraries and community centers in their communities, and two others said they would include elements from their *Initiative* exhibitions in their own galleries. Producing museums also expressed interest in publishing the culture guides, educational kits, and other printed material developed to support their exhibitions (Association of Children's Museums, 2006).

The major outputs of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* are destined to outlive the project that produced them.

Outcomes for the Children's Museum Field

As defined earlier, outcomes include changes in peoples' behavior, knowledge, and skills. Through the *Initiative* and its research and evaluation efforts, the children's museum field has gained expertise in the development of cultural exhibitions for children. One of the most profound and presumably lasting contributions of the *Initiative* has been the increased, shared knowledge about presenting Asian cultures – and culture in general – to American children in meaningful ways. The research study made clear that many children's museums had been struggling with how best to create successful cultural exhibitions. By developing, evaluating, and hosting exhibitions about Asian cultures, many institutions across America gained important experience with exhibitions about other cultures.

This knowledge continues to be shared in print and online, through reports like this one, available to both participating and non-participating museums. Of course, it remains to be seen whether future developers and designers of cultural exhibitions will be able to locate this knowledge when they need it, and if they will find it useful in their work. That in itself should become a target of future research.

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[4] All tables are included in Appendix C.
[5] These materials are cited for each exhibition in Appendix A.
[6] The quotations in this chapter were selected from host surveys as examples of the range of ways in which respondents discussed the topic in question. However, the number of quotations does not represent the relative frequency or strength of a particular response.

Impacts on the Children's Museum Field

This section examines the long-term impacts of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* on the children's museum field.

Developing Broader Audiences for Children's Museums

As noted in Chapter 6, individual children's museums found that when they hosted an *Initiative* exhibition, the diversity of their audiences often increased. Most exhibitions attracted increased numbers of Asian American families as well as older children and adults who had an interest in the focus culture. The *Initiative* is part of a larger trend of children's museums attempting to diversify both their audiences and their staff. As evidence of this trend, the diversity-focused *Interactivity 2007* in Chicago set a record for attendance at these ACM-sponsored conferences. Although it is not clear to what extent the *Initiative* has inspired this trend, the experiences of hosting museums clearly indicate that culturally focused exhibitions and programs are a successful approach to diversifying children's museums audiences in the short term.

Many *Initiative* exhibitions increased both the ethnic and age diversity of host museums' visitors. As one museum stated on its host survey, the *Initiative* provided the host museums with the "opportunity for children's museums to educate adults as well as children." Other host museums stated similar points.

> *The AEI will prove that children's museums can provide quality experiences and learning opportunities for multi-age groups. Children's museums can successfully educate others, including adults, about different cultures through hands-on exhibits.*

> *The [AEI] exhibit was well received by all ages, not just 5-12 years, showing museums can be enjoyed by all ages, 2 years to 59! Children play to learn and adults learn to play.*

Adults typically make up about half of children's museums audiences (e.g., Ringel, 2005). Within the field, there has been much interest and research on ways to help adults become more effective at facilitating family learning. To date, there has been less interest among children's museums in adult visitors learning for their own sakes. It remains to be seen how children's museums will follow up on the issues of age diversity and adult learning.

Creating More Cultural Exhibitions

There were indications that the *Initiative* helped make cultural exhibitions a higher priority across the field, beginning to "move institutions into more cultural content." As noted in Chapter 6, several host museums stated that their *Initiative* exhibition was the first cultural exhibition they had ever displayed. As one host museum stated,

> *I think [AEI] shows that the field is dedicated to teaching about diverse cultures as a core value.*

Other host museums also discussed this trend.

> *[AEI] will encourage the creation of other high quality cultural exhibits aimed at younger children.*

> *Museums will be looking for more cultural opportunities when developing new exhibits.*

> *It will encourage institutions to do more programs that promote cultural understanding.*

Some hosts said they were already working on plans to build their own cultural exhibitions.

We used [our AEI exhibition] as a common reference in planning a new exhibit and reviewing interpretation techniques.

We hope to host more like it, or even produce some exhibits of the quality ourselves.

Although the Initiative has begun to move the field in this direction, the incipient movement may need nurturing if it is going to continue.

Relationships with the Larger Asian American Community

Many children's museums are relatively recent additions to their communities' cultural landscapes, and their leaders often are looking for ways to increase the breadth and depth of their relationships to other community organizations. As discussed in Chapter 6, one of the most significant aspects of the *Initiative* for many host museums was the opportunity to build relationships with local Asian American organizations. Some hosts looked beyond their own backyard and depicted this as a widespread phenomenon.

The Initiative *has erected stronger ties between the Asian community and children's museums in large numbers of communities across the country.*

*The [*Initiative*] exhibits, if they were the same in other [host museums'] communities, created an opportunity to connect and work with new resources, new audiences, and new partners.*

The *Initiative* provides an effective model for children's museums seeking to build these sorts of ties within their own communities, and should be part of ACM's continued efforts to disseminate ideas and advice to its member organizations.

Relationships between Museums

Many smaller children's museums look to larger and more established museums as sources of ideas and inspiration. For some host museums, the relationship they built with their producing museums was an important part of the *Initiative*.

[One of the best things about AEI *was] getting to know the staff at the [producing museum] better. They are a great group of people to work with!*

We were looking to learn from a cultural pro [the producing museum we worked with], and we feel that happened.

Collaborations between museums, especially small and large museums, are a success story that should be repeated.

The host training sessions held at *InterActivity 2004* and *2006* served as a starting point for host museums to build relationships with both their producing museums and other host museums.

The required pre-conference (ACM annual conference) meeting day was an extremely good idea. It helped immensely in being able to establish communication with peer institutions AND with the [producing museum] crew!

Although there were limited *formal* opportunities for host museums to collaborate with one another, many host museums built informal relationships with the museums that hosted "their" exhibition immediately before and after their time slot. Some host museums found this to be an important aspect of the *Initiative*.

*[*AEI *was] a great way for us to share what we do and what we've learned with colleagues.*

Some host museums were looking forward to future relationship-building with other children's museums.

This Initiative *will create a more open dialogue between the participating museums.*

It will undoubtedly lead to more collaboration among children's museums in the future.

*[*AEI *provides] a new and outstanding model for future collaborations.*

It will be interesting to see how well the children's museum field can build on the collaborative aspects of the *Initiative*.

Perceptions and Roles for the Association of Children's Museums

Host museums were impressed that the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* demonstrated the capabilities of the Association of Children's Museums and the children's museums field as a whole.

*[*AEI *demonstrated that] that something of this scale and scope [can] be achieved!*

The ACM organization can bring opportunities to children's museums of all sizes by working on their behalf in areas we may not be able to achieve individually.

[A long-lasting effect of AEI *will be] strengthening the field's ability to host and manage these large-scale projects.*

Some host museums speculated about the availability of funding for future large-scale initiatives.

*[*AEI*] shows the field that there is funding available for large scale multicultural exhibitions and programming and that there is interest.*

The host museums were looking to the Association of Children's Museums to take the lead on new initiatives.

High praise for ACM for this initiative and hope something similar can happen again.

*[*AEI*] was a great first effort at building traveling exhibits for children on new subject matters. We strongly support ACM's involvement in this.*

The hosts were looking at the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* as a model for future large-scale initiatives.

It will provide a model for development of cultural exhibits and similar collaborations/partnerships.

I hope the model will be used to create other national exhibit opportunities.

By organizing the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums seems to have developed a reputation as an organization that can get things done for children's museums across the country. As one host museum wrote,

I believe we are all waiting to see what will be next!

Some Remaining Opportunities

Two important aspects of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* have had relatively little impact on the field so far. The process of developing and designing cultural exhibitions for children is one. While some of *AEI* exhibit teams' accumulated wisdom has been shared through this report, there are many details about the process of exhibition development that have not been widely shared beyond several *InterActivity* sessions and a few papers by exhibit team members (e.g., Gyllenhaal, 2007; Gyllenhaal & Perry, 2006; Ringel, 2005). This will begin to be remedied at *InterActivity 2008*.

Also, the seven exhibitions' evaluations seem to have had little impact beyond the producers' exhibition teams. Only a few host museum surveys even mentioned the evaluations, and they tended to discuss what did *not* happen. Apparently the front-end, formative, and summative evaluations for the seven exhibitions have not been widely distributed, among either the producing museums or the host museums. Although the producing museums may have been understandably reluctant to share results that were not always positive, this seems like a missed opportunity for all concerned.

Recommendations

Publicize and support the continued circulation of *Initiative* exhibitions. When the *Asian Exhibition Initiative* tour ends in 2008, continued circulation of the individual exhibitions becomes the responsibility of the producing museums. However, ACM should continue to serve as a clearing house for contact and tour information.

Track long-term changes in children's museum audiences. ACM should work with at least a subset of children's museums to track both short-term and long-term changes in the cultural and age diversity of their audiences, especially in response to exhibits and programs designed to affect that diversity.

Support children's museums that want to produce new exhibitions about other cultures, either for in-house or for travel. The sessions at *InterActivity 2007* were good starting points, but there need to be more permanent resources available to museums when they need it most.

Expand and share knowledge about cultural exhibitions in general, and about children's understanding of Asian cultures in particular. Portraying individual Asian cultures presents specific challenges. *Initiative* participants (including exhibition teams and evaluators) should share their ideas about how to deal with both the prior knowledge and pre-existing stereotypes that parents and older children have about more familiar cultures, such as Japan and China, and ways to approach less familiar cultures, given that parents bring less background knowledge and may have a harder time supporting their children's learning about those cultures.

Develop mechanisms to share producing museums' accumulated knowledge about the *process* of developing and designing cultural exhibitions. This could include future *InterActivity* sessions (as planned for *InterActivity 2008*). These sessions should also be written up in a more widely available format.

Tap the host museums' knowledge about building relationships with their Asian American communities. Each host has a story to tell, and these should be gathered and processed into a form that can be used by other museums.

Post existing *AEI* evaluation reports on the ACM website. For

those producing museums willing to give permission, add PDF versions of the reports to the *AEI* section of the website.

Incorporate evaluation sharing into future exhibit initiatives. As part of future contracts with producing museums, obtain permission to post evaluation reports on the initiative website.

Track the use of *Initiative* reports and related presentations. Employ website usage statistics, formal interviews, and informal contacts to track who accesses this information and how they use it over the next five to ten years.

For future initiatives, develop creative ways to help participating children's museums build relationships with each other. Blogs or other electronic forums might provide useful formats for this sort of networking. Museums could share programming ideas, tips for publicizing and staffing the exhibitions, and other day-to-day concerns, as well as larger issues.

See the Executive Summary for a synthesis of all the recommendations from this report.

References

Association of Children's Museums. (2002). *Interest survey report*. Unpublished manuscript, Association of Children's Museums, Washington, DC.

Association of Children's Museums. (2006). *Beyond* The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative: *Conversations with producing museums*. Unpublished manuscript, Association of Children's Museums, Washington, DC.

Gyllenhaal, E.D., & Perry, D. L. (2006). *Learning from Go East!* Presentation at *InterActivity 2007* in Boston, MA. http://selindaresearch.com/Learning_from_Go_East_03.pdf or http://selindaresearch.com/Learning_from_Go_East_03.ppt

Ringel, G. (2005). *Designing exhibits for kids: What are we thinking? Paper presented at the J. Paul Getty Museum Symposium, "From Content to Play: Family-Oriented Interactive Spaces in Art and History Museums," June 4-5, 2005*. Retrieved August 1, 2007, from the World Wide Web: http://www.getty.edu/education/symposium/Ringel.pdf

W. K. Kellogg Foundation. (2001). *Using logic models to bring together planning, evaluation, & action: Logic model development guide*. Battle Creek, MI. Retrieved July 29, 2007: http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

A complete list of references consulted during this study is included as Appendix D: Classified Bibliography.

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Appendix A:
DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ASIAN EXHIBIT INITIATIVE EXHIBITIONS

Table of Contents

Monkey King: A Journey to China

Produced by Children's Museum of Manhattan
Evaluated by BLiP research, New York, NY

Synopsis

Monkey King employed the traditional Chinese story of the Monkey King as a window to Chinese culture, past and present. Visitors walked through the story as characters were introduced and episodes recounted using a series of interactive and multimedia components.

Visitors were introduced to the Monkey King at the exhibition entrance (Fig. A-MK-1). Then they had opportunities to participate in re-created events from the story (Figs. A-MK-2, A-MK-3, and A-MK-4). They could also retell episodes using puppets and magnet boards (Figs. A-MK-5, A-MK-6, and A-MK-7), role-play as characters from the story (Fig. A-MK-8), and play games inspired by the story (Figs. A-MK-9 and A-MK-10). Supporting exhibits included cases containing Monkey King-related artifacts (Fig. A-MK-11) and label panels with background information on the story (Figs. A-MK-12 and A-MK-13). To help children better understand the story, one host museum showed a Monkey King video within the exhibition (Fig. A-MK-14).

Photographs of the Exhibition

As installed at Cinergy, Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati, Ohio

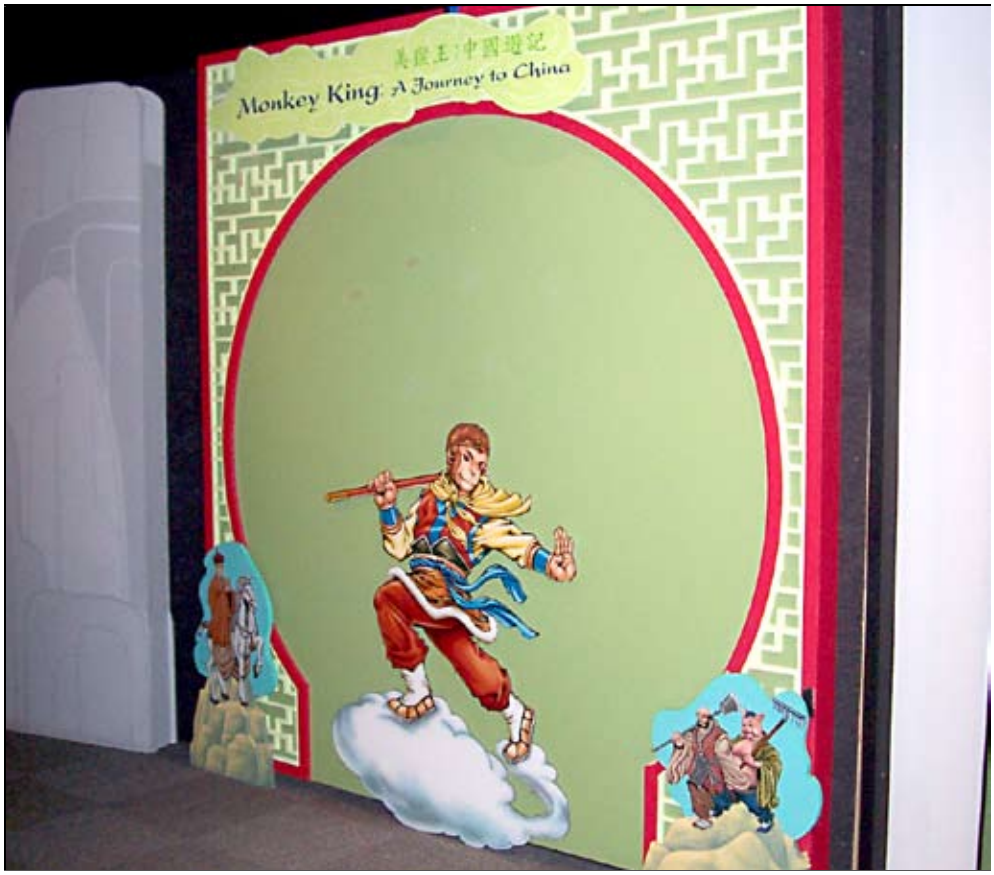

Fig. A-MK-1.
Entrance to *Monkey King*.

Fig. A-MK-2.
Monkey steals the peaches.

Fig. A-MK-3.
Monkey disrupts a banquet.

Fig. A-MK-4.
Martial arts interactive (*Monkey See, Monkey Do*).

Fig. A-MK-5.
Character-cutouts theater for re-enacting the story

Fig. A-MK-6.
Shadow-puppet theater for re-enacting scenes from the story.

Fig. A-MK-7. Magnet board for re-enacting part of the *Monkey King* story.

Fig. A-MK-8. Buddha's hand and story panel.

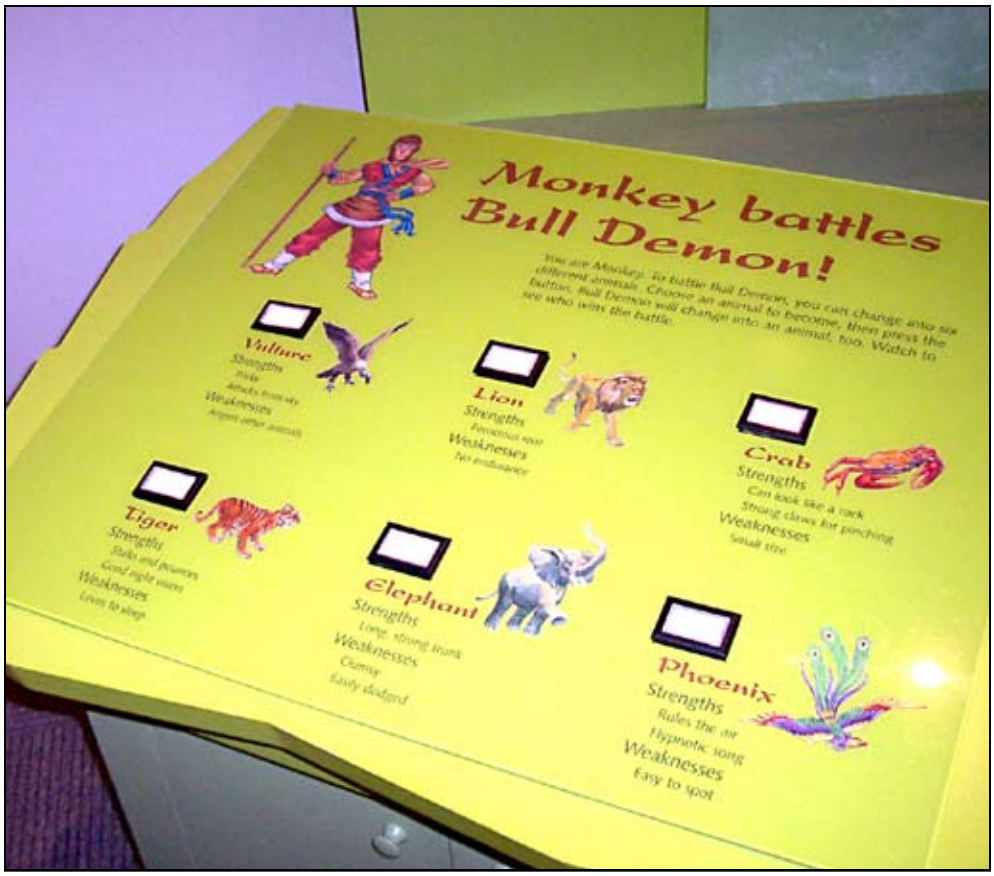

Fig. A-MK-9.
Control panel for the *Monkey King Battles the Bull Demon* computer game.

Fig. A-MK-10.
Cooperation game.

Fig. A-MK-11.
Artifact case.

Fig. A-MK-12.
Explanatory panels near the exhibition exit.

Fig. A-MK-13.
Reading corner with masks to try on.

Fig. A-MK-14.
***Monkey King* video added by host museum.**

Educational Materials

Kozel, J., Ogden, K., & Ting-Lee, Ming. (2003). *Monkey King educational handbook* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Children's Museum of Manhattan. 61 pp.

Evaluation References

Children's Museum of Manhattan. (n.d.). *Monkey King: A Journey to China. A traveling exhibition. Evaluation plan summary* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Children's Museum of Manhattan.

Children's Museum of Manhattan. (June, 2003). *Monkey King: A journey into the imagination of China. A traveling exhibition. Developmental framework* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Children's Museum of Manhattan.

BliP research. (2004a). *Topline summary of findings. Monkey King: A Journey to China summative evaluation* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Children's Museum of Manhattan.

BliP research. (2004b). *Monkey King: A Journey to China summative evaluation.* (PowerPoint presentation, May 12, 2004). New York: Children's Museum of Manhattan.

Host Museums

Children's Museum of Manhattan (NY), Imagine it! The Children's Museum of Atlanta (GA), Children's Museum of Richmond (VA), Cinergy, Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal (OH), The Iowa Children's Museum (Coralville, IA), Chicago Children's Museum (IL), Bay Area Discovery Museum (Sausalito, CA), Duluth Children's Museum (MN), The Discovery Center at Murfree Spring (Murfreesboro, TN), Grand Rapids Children's Museum (MI), and Exploration Place (Wichita, KS).

Hmong At Heart

Produced by Madison Children's Museum
Evaluated by Hardin L. K. Coleman, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

Synopsis

Hmong at Heart told the story of the Hmong people of Southeast Asia, many of whom came to the United States as refugees in the late 1970s. Like *Monkey King*, this exhibition let visitors walk through the story as it was told; however, this story was a true one, rather than a traditional folktale.

Exhibits near the entrance introduced visitors to the Hmong people and their story (Figs. A-HH-1 through A-HH-5). Then the exhibition immersed visitors in re-created settings representing important chapters in Hmong history. These included a traditional Hmong home and garden in Laos (Figs. A-HH-6 through A-HH-8); a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand (Figs. A-HH-9 through A-HH-14); and a Hmong home and yard in the United States (Figs. A-HH-15 through A-HH-18). Within each setting, visitors could interact and role-play with elements of Hmong culture representative of that chapter of the Hmong story.

Photographs of the Exhibition

As installed at the Children's Museum of Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Fig. A-HH-1.
Entrance to the *Hmong at Heart* Exhibition.

Fig. A-HH-2.
Story cloth and exhibit case near entrance to *Hmong at Heart*.

Fig. A-HH-3.
Close-up of Hmong story cloth d epicting move to the United States.

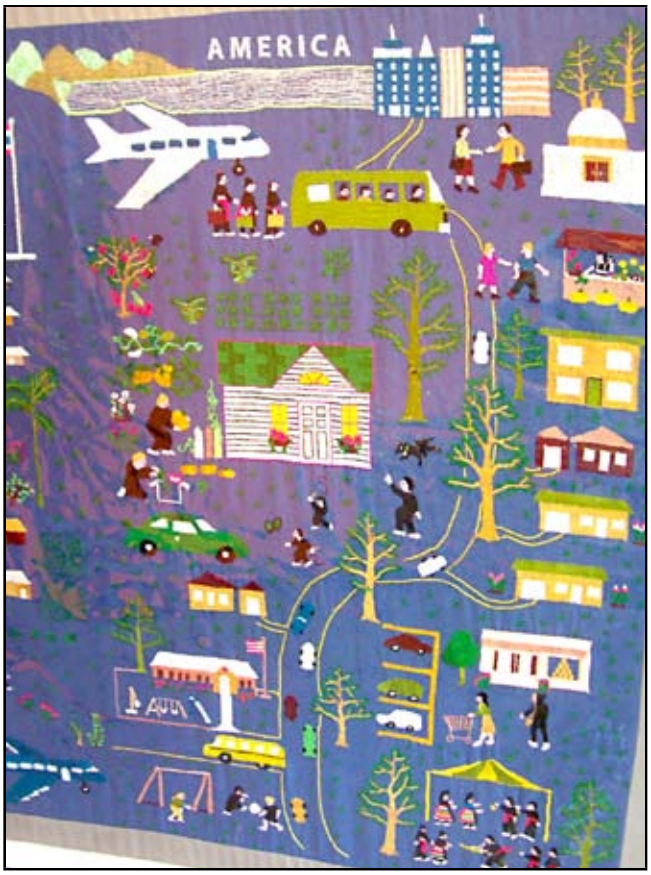

Fig. -HH-4.
Introductory exhibits inside the entrance to *Hmong at Heart*.

Fig. A-HH-5.
Exhibit explaining geographic aspects of the Hmong story, located outside the entrance at the Children's Museum of Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Fig. A-HH-6.
Exterior of a Hmong home in Laos.

Fig. A-HH-7.
Interior of Hmong home in Laos, including kitchen area.

Fig. A-HH-8. Hmong yard in Laos, including garden on left and outbuilding on right.

Fig. A-HH-9. Overview of Thailand section (on left) and United States section (on right) as installed at Winston-Salem Children's Museum, North Carolina.

Fig. A-HH-10.
Chalkboard in Hmong school in Thailand section of the exhibition.

Fig. A-HH-11.
Laos to Thailand transition.

Fig. A-HH-12.
Hmong home in Thailand.

Fig. A-HH-13.
Hmong marketplace, Thailand.

Fig. A-HH-14. Hmong mail center in Thailand.

Fig. A-HH-15.
Hmong home, United States.

Fig. A-HH-16.
Hmong garden, United States.

Fig. A-HH-17.
Interior of home in United States.
View through door is simulated.

Fig. A-HH-18.
Interior of home in United States.
Video showed scenes of Hmong life in America.

Educational Materials

Cha, D., Vue, M. Z., & Carmen, S. (2004). *Field guide to Hmong culture*. WI: Madison Children's Museum. 89 pp. http://www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/hmong_field_guide.pdf

Coleman, H. (2004). *Learning culture: Getting to know each other: A parent, teacher, and adult guide to helping children learn*. WI: Madison Children's Museum. 4 pp.

Wagler, M., Olson, R., & Pryor, A. (2004). *Kids' field guide to local culture*. WI: Madison Children's Museum. 138 pp. http://www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/local_kids_guide.pdf

Wagler, M. (2004). *Teachers' guide to local culture*. WI: Madison Children's Museum. 69 pp. http://www.madisonchildrensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/local_teachers_guide.pdf

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Coleman, H. L. K., & Yang, A. (2004). *Hmong at Heart evaluation: Learning and appreciating culture* (Unpublished manuscript). WI: Madison Children's Museum.

Madison Children's Museum. (n.d.). *Hmong at Heart evaluation and prototyping summary: Summary of front-end evaluation and prototyping, results and summary of full evaluation plan* (U npublished manuscript). WI: Madison Children's Museum.

Madison Children's Museum. (n.d.). *Evaluation & prototyping summary* (Unpublished manuscript). WI: Madison Children's Museum.

Host Museums

Madison Children's Museum (WI), Fox Cities Children's Museum (Appleton, WI), Children's Museum of Oak Ridge (TN), Children's Museum at Holyoke (MA), Providence Children's Museum (RI), Children's Museum of Winston-Salem (NC), WOW! Children's Museum (Louisville, CO), Explorium of Lexington (KY), The Children's Museum at La Habra (CA), Wonderscope Children's Museum (Shawnee, KS), and Gertrude Salzer Museum of La Crosse (WI).

Song of Korea

Produced by Austin Children's Museum and developed in close collaboration with the Samsung Children's Museum in Seoul, Korea
Evaluated by the Institute for Learning Innovation, Annapolis, MD

Synopsis

Song of Korea used music to provide an introduction to South Korean cultural practices and traditions. Each section was introduced by life-sized photo cutouts of Korean children (e.g., Fig. A-SK-1). After viewing cases with background information of Korean culture (Fig. A-SK-2), visitors could explore and interact with immersive re-creations of a traditional Korean home (Figs. A-SK- 3 and A-SK-4) and drum-makers' workshop (Fig. A-SK-5). They could also explore a modern apartment (Figs. A-SK-6 and A-SK-7) and school classroom (Figs. A-SK-8 and A-SK-9). Visitors could sing and dance to Korean music in several settings (Figs. A-SK-10 through A-SK-12). The exhibition also included interactives about Korean writing (Figs. A-SK-13 and A-SK-14) and an exhibit about traditional Korean food (Figs. A-SK-15).

Photographs of the Exhibition

As installed at Children's Museum of Illinois in Decatur, Illinois, and Betty Brinn Children's Museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Fig. A-SK-1.
Entrance to *Song of Korea* with life-sized photo cutouts.

Fig. A-SK-2 A and B.
Exhibit cases in introductory section of *Song of Korea*.

Fig. A-SK-3.
Exterior view of the traditional Korean home.

Fig. A-SK-4 A and B.
Activities inside the traditional Korean home, including caring for a baby doll (pushing yellow button plays a lullaby) and trying on Korean clothes.

Fig. A-SK-5.
Traditional drum workshop, where visitors could assemble a drum (on left) or learn Korean rhythms (on right).

Fig. A-SK-6 A and B.
Girl who introduced visitors to the modern Korean apartment and the apartment's electronic organ (which is actually a touch-screen computer interactive).

Fig. A-SK-7 A and B.
Visitors could prepare a meal in the hands-on kitchen to serve the family in the modern Korean apartment.

Fig. A-SK-8.
Korean classroom.

Fig. A-SK-9. Animal sounds interactive in the Korean classroom.

Fig. A-SK-10. Projection screen and mirrored walls of the *Norebang* or "singing room," where visitors were encouraged to sing and dance to recorded music.

Fig. A-SK-11.
Song selections available in the *Norebang*.

Fig. A-SK-12 A and B.
Sing-along interactive, where visitors could record and replay their choice of songs.

Fig. A-SK-13.
Interactive where visitors could select and write their own Korean names.

Fig. A-SK-14.
Interactive where visitors could make rubbings of Korean writing.

Fig. A-SK-15.
Storage jars for simulated (spicy Korean vegetables).

Educational Materials

Austin Children's Museum. (2004). *Song of Korea site support notebook*. (Unpublished manuscript.) Austin, TX: Author.

Jones, B. (2004). *Song of Korea programs*. (Unpublished manuscript.) TX: Austin Children's Museum. 5 pp.

Evaluation References

Coleman, H. L. K., & Karcher, M. J. (May, 2003). *Developmental framework for planning cultural exhibits for children* (Unpublished manuscript). WI: Madison Children's Museum. TX: Austin Children's Museum.

Institute for Learning Innovation. (2003). *Executive summary. Front-end evaluation. Song of Korea exhibition* (Unpublished manuscript). TX: Austin Children's Museum.

Jones, M. C., & Hendrix, M. (2003). *Front-end evaluation. Song of Korea exhibition* (Unpublished manuscript). TX: Austin Children's Museum.

Kessler, C., Hendrix, M., Stein, J., & Luke, J. J. (2004). *Song of Korea summative evaluation research* (Unpublished manuscript). TX: Austin Children's Museum.

Host Museums

Austin Children's Museum (TX), Greensboro Children's Museum (NC), Staten Island Children's Museum (NY), Children's Museum of Illinois (Decatur), The Children's Museum of Denver (CO), Garden State Discovery Museum (Cherry Hill, NJ), Betty Brinn Children's Museum (Milwaukee, WI), Worldways Children's Museum (Baldwin, MO), Children's Museum of Tacoma (WA), Children's Museum of Eau Claire (WI), The Children's Museum of Brownsville (TX).

Dragons and Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales

Produced by The Children's Museum of Houston
Evaluated by Selinda Research Associates, Inc., Chicago, IL

Synopsis

Dragons and Fairies used traditional Viet Namese stories to introduce children to this country's rich culture and heritage. The folktales were told using a variety of interactives (Figs. A-DF-1 and A-DF-2) and multimedia (Fig. A-DF-3). Most story-telling interactives were displayed in immersive settings, including a Viet Namese fishing boat (Figs. A-DF-4 and A-DF-5) and home (Fig. A-DF-6).

Other interactive components allowed visitors to experience aspects of Viet Namese life. These often included both protected artifacts and hands-on components (Fig. A-DF-7 and A-DF-8). Additional interactive components included musical instruments to play (Fig. A-DF-9) and a traditional food market (Fig. A-DF-10). Most exhibit components were designed to fit within the immersive Viet Namese setting, including a set of exhibits introducing the traditional *Tet* holiday (Fig. A-DF-11), and computer interactives with information about the lives of Viet Namese children, set within an Internet café (Fig. A-DF-12). Visitors could also "ride" a motor scooter through the streets (Fig. A-DF-13), carry a traditional yoke (Fig. A-DF-14), and learn Viet Namese children's names (Fig. A-DF-15).

Photographs of the Exhibition

As installed at the Family Museum of Art & Science in Bettendorf, Iowa, and Boston Children's Museum

Fig. A-DF-1.
A story-telling interactive in *Dragons and Fairies*.

Fig. A-DF-2.
Story-telling interactive.

Fig. A-DF-3. Room with a video story.

Fig. A-DF-4.
Viet Namese fishing boat.

Fig. A-DF-5.
Story-telling interactive inside fishing boat.

Fig. A-DF-6.
Exterior of Viet Namese home in *Dragons and Fairies*.

Fig. A-DF-7.
Kitchen god shrine, including artifacts and hands-on components.

Fig. A-DF-8.
Shrine to ancestors, including artifacts and hands-on components.

Fig. A-DF-9. Music-making interactive.

Fig. A-DF-10. Outdoor market.

Fig. A-DF-11.
***Tet* exhibits.**

Fig. A-DF-12.
Computer interactives.

Fig. A-DF-13.
Climb-on motor scooter.

Fig. A-DF-14.
Traditional Viet Namese yoke.

Fig. A-DF-15. Interactive introducing children's names in Viet Namese.

Educational Materials

The Children's Museum of Houston. (2004). *Dragons & Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales traveling exhibit multimedia kits manual.* (Unpublished manuscript) TX: The Children's Museum of Houston. 54 pp.

The Children's Museum of Houston. (2004). *Dragons & Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales traveling exhibit education manual*. (Unpublished manuscript) TX: The Children's Museum of Houston. 37 pp.

Evaluation References

The Children's Museum of Houston. (December, 2002). *Developmental framework for learning about cultural differences. Dragons and Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales* (Unpublished manuscript). TX: The Children's Museum of Houston.

Finamore, E. B. (2004). *Remedial/summative evaluation of Dragons and Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales* (Unpublished manuscript). TX: The Children's Museum of Houston.

Host Museums

The Children's Museum of Houston (TX), Louisiana Children's Museum (New Orleans), Lincoln Children's Museum (NE), Family Museum of Art & Science (Bettendorf, IA), Stepping Stones Museum for Children (Norwalk, CT), Boston Children's Museum (MA), Lied Discovery Children's Museum (Las Vegas, NV), Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose (CA), Children's Museum of Stockton (CA), Please Touch Museum (Philadelphia, PA), and EdVenture Children's Museum (Columbia, SC).

Five Friends from Japan: Children in Japan Today

Produced by Boston Children's Museum and Capital Children's Museum (now called the National Children's Museum), Washington, DC
Evaluated by People, Places & Design Research, Northampton, MA

Synopsis

Five Friends told the stories of five Japanese children (Fig. A-FF-1), highlighting differences among the five Japanese friends, and similarities and differences with American children's lives. The exhibition's goals included counteracting Americans' stereotypical belief that all Japanese children are alike.

Visitors entered the exhibition through a simulation of the five friends' school classroom. The classroom environment included lots of printed material on the walls and chalkboard, personalized with photos of the five friends and their teacher (Figs. A-FF-2 through A-FF-4). The classroom also included desks to explore (Fig. A-FF-5) and ways for visitors to help out (Fig. A-FF-6). Visitors met the five friends one-by-one, walking down transitional hallways (Fig. A-FF-7) into re-created settings from their lives away from school (Figs. A-FF-8 through A-FF-17).

Photographs of the Exhibition

As installed at the Omaha Children's Museum in Omaha, Nebraska

Fig. A-FF-1.
Welcome panel at entrance, including photos of the five friends.

Fig. A-FF-2.
Chalkboard in classroom, with video of one of the friends writing.

Fig. A-FF-3.
The friends' teacher welcomes visitors to their classroom.

Fig. A-FF-4. Bulletin boards combine photos of the five friends with examples of students' schoolwork

Fig. A-FF-5. Visitors could also help clean up.

Fig. A-FF-6. Visitors could explore the five friends' desks at school.zthe classroom.

Fig. A-FF-7A and B.
Hallways branching off the classroom led visitors to settings from the children's lives away from school, including their homes, a backyard, and a family business.

Fig. A-FF-8.
Ken's room included a desk and table where he practiced writing.

Fig. A-FF-9 A and B.
As they entered Ken's room, visitors were reminded to remove their shoes. In a video, Ken showed and talked about his life.

Fig. A-FF-10.
Visitors entered Shoko's living room to explore her life, which included music and collecting natural treasures

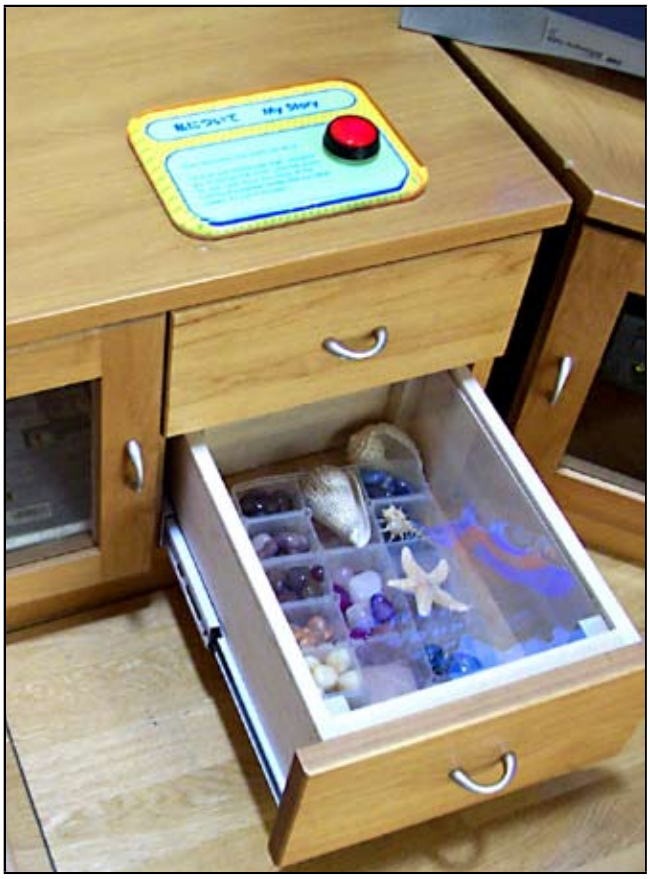

Fig. A-FF-11 A and B.
Visitors opened drawers to explore Shoko's collections, pressed a button to start a video about her life, and played her favorite music.

Fig. A-FF-12.
When they entered Sakiko's bedroom, visitors could lie on her bed, or look under it to see her clothes.

Fig. A-FF-13 A, B, C. Visitors could also try on Sakiko's clothes, open drawers to see her toys, and read examples of manga collection at her desk.

Fig. A-FF-14. Visitors entered Yusuke's yard, where they could practice martial arts, help in the garden, and collect bugs (which he preferred to doing school work).

Fig. A-FF-15 A and B.
Yusuke talked about his life in a video and showed photos in his family album. Visitors could also explore his garden shed.

Fig. A-FF-16.
Aisa's Grandpa owned a tofu shop, where visitors could explore and help out.

Fig. A-FF-17 A and B.
In the hands-on kitchen, visitors could help make the tofu. Visitors also could buy and sell many varieties of tofu in the front of the shop.

Educational Materials

Boston Children's Museum & National Children's Museum. (2004). *Five Friends from Japan* (Unpublished manuscript). MA: Boston Children's Museum.

Evaluation References

Boston Children's Museum & Capital Children's Museum. (September, 2004). *Front-end assessment/adults* (Unpublished manuscript). Washington, DC: Capital Children's Museum.

Boston Children's Museum & Capital Children's Museum. (n.d.). *Summary of front-end assessment conducted September 2002 at TCM and CCM* (Unpublished manuscript). Washington, DC: Capital Children's Museum.

Boston Children's Museum & Capital Children's Museum. (n.d.). *Five Friends from Japan: Developmental profiles, messages, and interpretive strategies, by room* (Unpublished manuscript). MA: Boston Children's Museum.

Hayward, J., & Werner, B. (2004). *Summative evaluation of Five Friends from Japan* (Unpublished manuscript). MA: Boston Children's Museum.

People, Places & Design Research (2003). *Storyline testing for a new exhibit: Five Friends from Japan* (Unpublished manuscript). MA: Boston Children's Museum

Host Museums

Boston Children's Museum (MA), Discovery Center Museum (Rockford, IL), National Children's Museum (Washington, DC), The Children's Museum, Indianapolis (IN), Omaha Children's Museum (NE), The Children's Museum of Kansas City (KS), Creative Discovery Museum (Chattanooga, TN), Portland Children's Museum (OR), The Magic House, St. Louis Children's Museum (MO), Young at Art (Davie, FL), Port Discovery, the Kid-Powered Museum (Baltimore, MD), and Exploris (Raleigh, NC).

Japan and Nature: Spirit of The Seasons

Produced by the Brooklyn Children's Museum
Evaluated by Selinda Research Associates, Inc., Chicago, IL,
and Melissa Wadman, Research + Evaluation Consultant, Brooklyn, NY

Synopsis

Japan and Nature explored the roles that nature plays over the four seasons in four parts of Japan (Figs. A-JN-1 and A-JN-2). It included four immersive settings, one for each season. Within each setting, visitors were invited to explore and role-play using interactive, hands-on, and multimedia components.

Winter included a holiday meal in a home in Sapporo, Japan (Figs. A-JN-3 through A-JN-5). In *Spring*, visitors could picnic among the cherry blossoms, dress up for children's day, and visit a classroom (Figs. A-JN-6 and A-JN-7). *Summer* visited Lake Biwa, where visitors could take photos, fish, and collect bugs (Figs. A-JN-8 and A-JN-9). In *Fall*, visitors entered a shrine near Kyoto to celebrate a traditional fall festival (Figs. A-JN-10 and A-JN-11).

Photographs of the Exhibition

As installed at the Austin Children's Museum in Austin, Texas

Fig. A-JN-1.
Overview of *Japan and Nature*. The *Winter* section is lower left, *Spring* is lower right, *Summer* is beside the window (just left of center), and *Fall* is upper left.

Fig. A-JN-2 A and B.
The *Where in the World* is Japan? and *Fly Over Japan* interactives, where visitors could explore the geography of Japan on global and national scales.

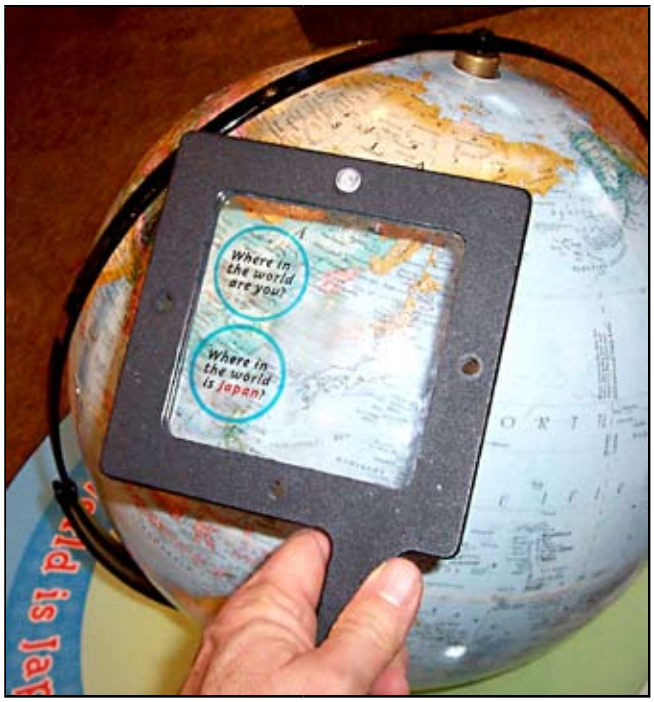

Fig. A-JN-3.
View of the *Winter* section, which was a simulated home in Sapporo, Japan, where visitors were invited to help celebrate a winter holiday.

Fig. A-JN-4 A and B.
Visitors could serve a winter meal in the Sapporo home, or order a special holiday meal over the phone.

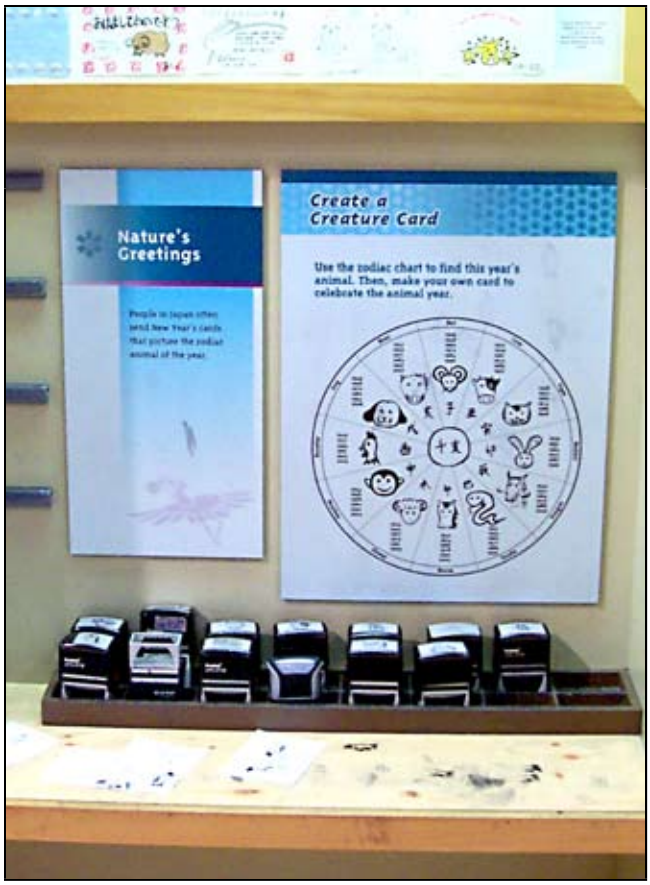

Fig. A-JN-5 A and B.
Visitors could also use zodiac animal stamps to make a New Year's card or move eyes, mouth, and nose to *Make a Funny Face* on a magnetic board.

Fig. A-JN-6 A and B.
The *Spring* section was set at cherry blossom time. Visitors could picnic or try on Japanese clothing to celebrate a children's holiday.

Fig. A-JN-7 A and B.
The *Spring* section also included a school setting, where visitors could practice writing the nature-inspired Japanese alphabet.

Fig. A-JN-8.
The *Summer* section was set outdoors at Lake Biwa, where visitors could take video "photographs" of their relatives and friends.

Fig. A-JN-9 A and B. Also in the *Summer* setting, visitors could go fishing with magnetic poles and "catch bugs" by making rubbings of Japanese insects.

Fig. A-JN-10.
The *Fall* section was set at a shrine in Kyoto, where visitors could enjoy the fall foliage and explore the shrine's natural setting.

Fig. A-JN-11 A and B.
Visitors could also put on a festival jacket and play the drum in a parade, or write a wish on a piece of paper and post it for others to read.

Educational Materials

Timmel, E., Romanowski, B., Goldberg, K., Doron, C., Hannemann, M., & Maclin, T. (2004). *Japan and Nature educational programs* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Brooklyn Children's Museum & Brooklyn Botanic Garden. 12 pp.

Evaluation References

Brooklyn Children's Museum. (June, 2003). *Developmental framework: Japan and Nature: Spirits of the Seasons* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Brooklyn Children's Museum.

Richardson, J. F., Garibay, C., & Gyllenhaal, E. D. (2002). *Understanding American children's perceptions of Japan. A front-end literature review* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Brooklyn Children's Museum.

Wadman, M. (2004a). *Executive summary. Summative evaluation of Japan & Nature: Spirits of the Seasons* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Brooklyn Children's Museum.

Wadman, M. (2004b). *Summative evaluation of Japan & Nature: Spirits of the Seasons* (Unpublished manuscript). New York: Brooklyn Children's Museum.

Host Museums

Brooklyn Children's Museum (NY), Children's Museum of Maine (Portland), Amazement Square, The Rightmire Children's Museum (Lynchburg, VA), Miami Children's Museum (FL), Dallas Children's Museum (TX), Austin Children's Museum (TX), Hawaii Children's Discovery Center (Honolulu), Hands On Children's Museum (Olympia, WA), Kohl Children's Museum (Glenview, IL), Children's Discovery Museum of Central Illinois (Bloomington), and Sciencenter (Ithaca, NY).

Jump to Japan: Discovering Culture through Popular Art

Produced by Minnesota Children's Museum, St. Paul, and the Children's Museum, Seattle
Evaluated by Selinda Research Associates, Inc., Chicago, IL

Synopsis

Jump to Japan introduced visitors to Japanese culture through contemporary *anime* (animated films) and *manga* (comics). The exhibition included three major sections: *Fantastic Animation*, *Artful Traditions*, and *Manga Mania* (Fig. A-JJ-1).

In *Fantastic Animation*, visitors could immerse themselves in settings from the anime feature, *My Neighbor Totoro*, and learn about its director, Hayao Miyazaki (Figs. A-JJ-2 through A-JJ-4). *Artful Traditions* explored the traditional roots of *anime* and *manga* and allowed visitors to experience traditional Japanese culture by dressing in Japanese clothing and performing a tea ceremony (Figs. A-JJ-5 and A-JJ-6). In *Manga Mania*, visitors could read or sell comics in a re-created *manga* shop and make their own *manga* and *anime* scenes (Figs. A-JJ-7 through A-JJ-10).

Photographs of the Exhibition

As installed at Boonshoft Museum of Discovery in Dayton, Ohio, and DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville, Illinois

Fig. A-JJ-1.
Exhibit introducing the three major themes of *Jump to Japan.*

Fig. A-JJ-2.
In the *Fantastic Animation* section, visitors could climb inside the Cat Bus from *My Neighbor Totoro* for a ride.

Fig. A-JJ-3 A and B.
Visitors could also meet "life-sized" characters from the movie and dress-up to role-play as Totoro.

Fig. A-JJ-4.
Also in *Fantastic Animation*, visitors could watch popular *anime* films and explore how animation works.

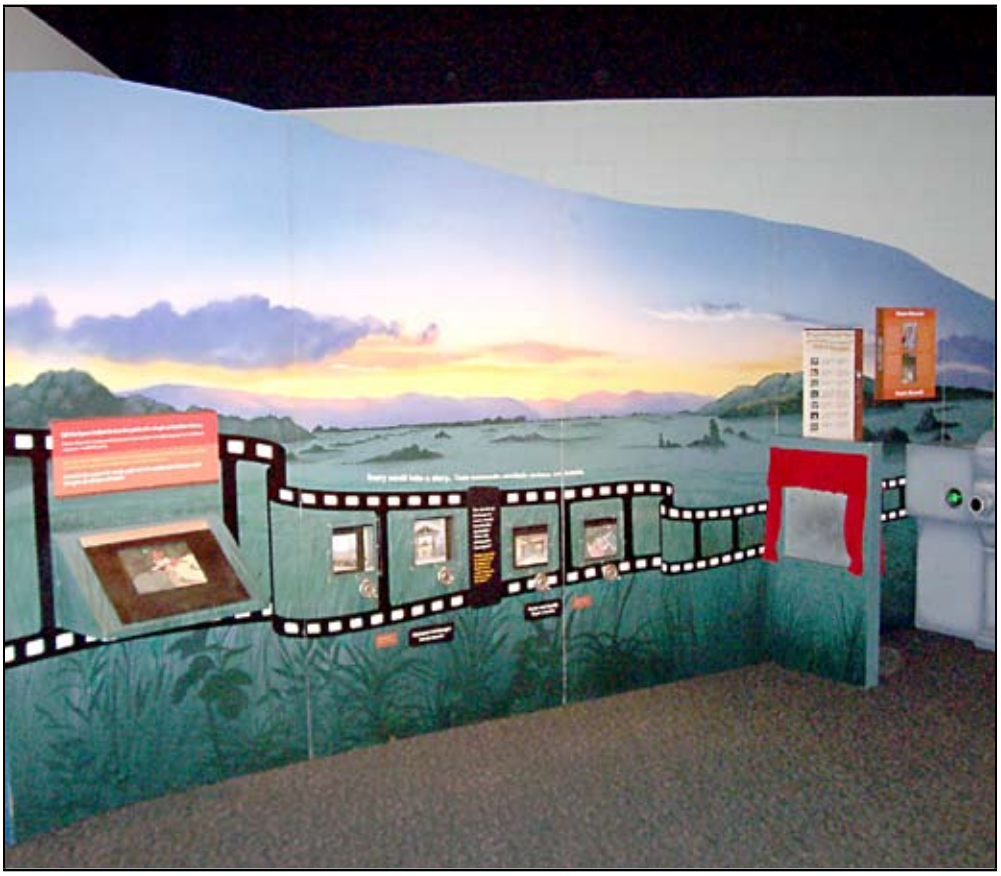

Fig. A-JJ-5 A and B.
In *Artful Traditions*, visitors could unroll a traditional scroll and play a traditional game that matches poems with printed illustrations.

Fig. A-JJ-6 A and B. *Artful Traditions* also included opportunities to role-play Japanese traditions, like a tea ceremony and traditional clothing.

Fig. A-JJ-7.
The *Manga Mania* section included a re-created *manga* shop where visitors could explore modern forms of Japanese popular art.

Fig. A-JJ-8 A and B.
Inside the shop, visitors could pretend to buy and sell *manga* and related products.

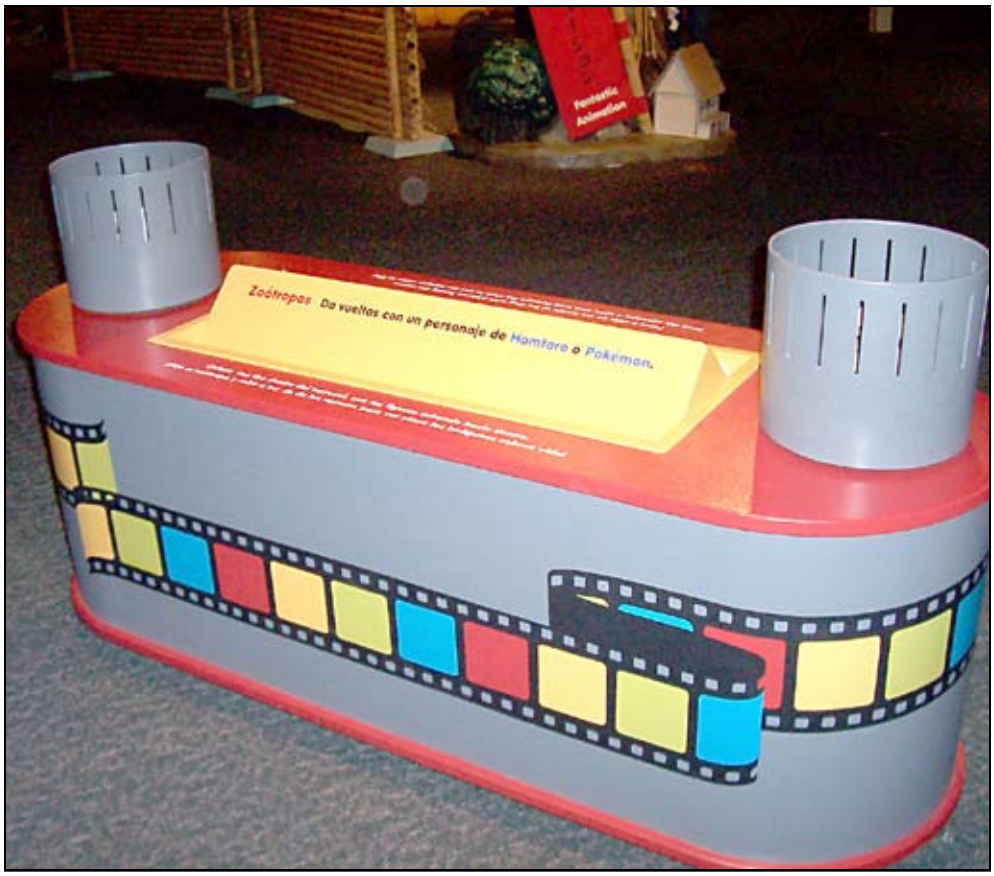

Fig. A-JJ-9.
Elsewhere in *Manga Mania*, visitors could draw their own manga characters and animate them using zoetropes.

Fig. A-JJ-10.
Visitors could also make their own animated videos by posing cutout characters and shooting them, frame by frame.

Educational Materials

Boekhoff, A. (2003). *Jump to Japan museum activities guide* (Unpublished manuscript). St. Paul: Minnesota Children's Museum. 14 pp.

Boekhoff, A. (2003). *Jump to Japan kit and school curriculum guide* (Unpublished manuscript). St. Paul: Minnesota Children's Museum. 21 pp.

Boekhoff, A. (2003). *Jump to Japan pre and post visit activities for teachers, grades K-6* (Unpublished manuscript). St. Paul: Minnesota Children's Museum. 5 pp.

Evaluation References

Beaumont, L. (2004). *Summative evaluation of Jump to Japan* (Unpublished manuscript). St. Paul: Minnesota Children's Museum.

Minnesota Children's Museum & the Children's Museum, Seattle. (n.d.). *Developmental framework: Philosophical belief statement. Jump to Japan: Discovering Culture Through Popular Art* (Unpublished manuscript). St. Paul: Minnesota Children's Museum. Seattle, WA: The Children's Museum.

Host Museums

The Children's Museum, Seattle (WA), Felix Adler Memorial Association, Inc./Children's Discovery Center (Clinton, IA), Explora (Albuquerque, NM), The Children's Museum of Memphis (TN), Boonshoft Museum of Discovery (Dayton, OH), Minnesota Children's Museum (St. Paul), DuPage Children's Museum (Naperville, IL), COSI Toledo (OH), Pittsburgh Children's Museum (PA), Buell Children's Museum (Pueblo, CO), Treehouse Children's Museum (Ogden, UT), and San Antonio Children's Museum (TX).

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Appendix B: DESCRIPTION OF THE ASIAN EXHIBIT INITIATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

Introduction

The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative (the *Initiative*) developed seven traveling exhibitions for children, each focusing on a single Asian culture. The seven exhibitions opened in early 2004, and each exhibition then traveled to at least 10 children's museums around the United States.[1, 2] As part of the *Initiative*, the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) commissioned a research study to assess the contributions of the *Initiative* to American children's understandings of Asian culture. This appendix describes the research study conducted by Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (SRA), detailing the research questions, methodology, and methods used to complete the study.

Research Questions

While individual evaluations determined the success of each exhibition, the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* research study investigated larger issues of interest to the children's museum field as a whole. The study had three major research questions. The primary research question was:

> *What was the impact of the seven Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative traveling exhibitions on American children's understanding of Asian cultures?*

The two secondary research questions were:

> *What was the impact of interactive exhibits on children's awareness and understanding of different cultures?*
>
> *What was the impact of the Asian Exhibit Initiative on the children's museum field?*

For the purpose of this study, the research team defined "interactivity" broadly, as active experiences where children learn by doing. It includes experiences that engage all the senses, foster conversations, provide for role-playing, and/or spark imaginative play.

The research questions were used as a starting point for developing a *topical framework* for the study. Developed collaboratively with representatives of ACM, the topical framework included specific questions which, as they were answered, allowed the research team to develop a complete and holistic understanding of the issues under investigation. The topical framework is reproduced at the end of this appendix.

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[1] For a detailed overview of the *Initiative*, see the Introduction to this report

[2] For a detailed description of each of the seven exhibitions, see Appendix A.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the overarching framework that guided the study. *Methods* refers to the data-collection strategies or techniques used during the study, and *Design of the Study* to the specific ways in which these methods were applied. All three aspects of the study are described in this and the following sections.

The *Asian Exhibit Initiative* research study used naturalistic inquiry methodology, which is an ethnographic and primarily qualitative approach to understanding visitors and museums. Naturalistic inquiry is a rigorous approach to understanding experiences in the natural context in which they occur (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal of naturalistic methodology is to provide a holistic understanding of the topic of study from a variety of perspectives. It includes collecting data from a variety of sources and triangulating that data to develop a thorough understanding of the subject of investigation. This approach to visitor research is particularly useful for complex projects such as the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* because respondents come to the project with varied experiences, interests, and levels of knowledge.

One of the strengths of naturalistic inquiry is that unanticipated findings often emerge from the data, often in respondents' own words. This type of inquiry allows for the researcher to follow up on threads and themes that characterize how respondents think about their experiences. This approach also allowed the stakeholders to develop a rich understanding of the ways in which participants reacted to, interpreted, and learned from the *Asian Exhibit Initiative*.

Data Collection Methods

A number of data collection strategies were used during this study. Each of these is described in this section.

Literature Reviews

One of the first stages in the research study was completion of two literature reviews, one about interactivity in children's museums (Gyllenhaal, 2004) and the other about children's understanding of Asian cultures (Gyllenhaal, Gilmartin, & Garibay, 2004). The purposes of the reviews were (a) to provide a frame of reference for planning and interpreting subsequent segments of the overall evaluation study; and (b) to provide a context for understanding the findings of the study as they emerged. Thus, the literature reviews served as starting points for exploring the research questions.

Research methods for the literature review included:

- Searches of the SRA Library holdings in these topic areas and of the extensive databases and files maintained by members of the research team.
- Consultation of existing literature reviews completed by SRA staff on children's understandings of Japan and similar topics, as well as other SRA reports that included original research or literature discussions about interactive exhibits.
- Searches through the World Wide Web, including various ERIC databases, on-line catalogs of public and academic libraries, on-line visitor studies and public understanding of science databases, and more general search engines, such as Google.com.
- Consultation with SRA staff who had participated in evaluations of cultural exhibitions at The Field Museum, Brooklyn Children's Museum, and elsewhere.

- Examination and analysis of a series of evaluation reports and related documents completed for the *Asian Exhibit Initiative*.

The references consulted during these reviews are included in Appendix D: Classified Bibliography.

Document Analysis

To better understand the goals and design of the seven individual exhibitions, the research team completed a *document analysis* of annual reports by producing museums, evaluation reports completed during development of the seven exhibitions, and other documents describing the design and development of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* as a whole, and of the seven exhibitions. The major documents and reports are listed by exhibition in Appendix D. Additional documents included grant proposals, meeting summaries, and design plans. Researchers also examined the Web sites and publicity materials from many of the museums that hosted *Initiative* exhibitions.

Staff Interviews

A *depth interview* is an open-ended and relatively unstructured conversation between a researcher and one or more respondents. SRA researchers conducted depth interviews with staff from both producing and host museums and with ACM staff. Staff from producing museums were interviewed by phone, and staff at host museums visited by the researchers were interviewed in person, often within the exhibition. Depth interview protocols guided the interviews. During each interview, probing questions and new lines of inquiry were developed based on the responses received from that respondent. With respondents' permission, interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for continuing analysis.

Written Surveys

To investigate the host museums' experiences with the *Initiative*, written *host surveys* were completed by all museums that hosted an *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibition. This survey was developed in consultation with the ACM and covered a full range of issues related to hosting the exhibition. In addition to collecting quantitative data about visitation at the exhibitions and host-developed programming, it also probed for host staff impressions about a range of other issues, including the impacts of the Initiative on the host museum and the children's museum field. The survey is reproduced in Appendix C: Data Tables.

Site Visits

SRA staff researchers visited each of the *Initiative* exhibitions at host museums at least once, where they collected first-hand data in the exhibitions. On-site data collection included (a) *unobtrusive observations*, (b) *intercept interviews*, (c) *exit interviews*, and (d) *participant observations*.

During unobtrusive observations, researchers stood back and watched visitors as they explored one of the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibitions, trying to stay unobserved by the group they were watching. Notes recorded which exhibits the group stopped at, how long they stayed, and what they did and said at each component. As part of these observations, researchers sought to describe the range of ways that visitors engaged with the exhibitions.

Researchers conducted two types of depth interviews with visitors to *Initiative* exhibitions. First, after completing an unobtrusive observation at a particular exhibit or component, researchers sometimes approached the respondent group to request

an interview. This type of depth interview is referred to as an *intercept interview*. Second, researchers sometimes observed visitor groups during their entire visit to the *Initiative* exhibition, then approached them as they prepared to leave the exhibition and asked if they would participate in an interview. This type of depth interview is referred to as an *exit interview*. Starting with the questions in the topical framework, researchers developed depth interview protocols that focused first on what they had observed the respondents doing within the exhibition and then opened up to investigate a range of broader topics. Interviews included probing questions and new lines of inquiry based on visitors' responses. They were tape recorded with respondents' permission and then transcribed for continuing analysis.

In addition to the unobtrusive observations described above, researchers also conducted *participant observations* with some visitor groups. In these cases, with visitor permission, researchers joined an individual or group once they had begun interacting with an exhibit component and asked them what they were doing, thinking about, and experiencing. Participant observations often yielded information that was not possible with un-cued, unobtrusive observations described above. Because naturalistic inquiry, by definition, recognizes that the researchers influence what they are studying, researchers tried to note and understand the nature of their influences as they watched and talked with participant observation groups.

Design of the Study

Data Collection

The literature review reports were completed during 2004. Since then, SRA researchers have continued to incorporate new literature sources into their ongoing analysis. The initial stage of document analysis was completed during 2005, and the researchers have continued to re-read and analyze the evaluation reports throughout the duration of the study. Most producing museum staff were interviewed during 2005, and ACM staff were interviewed during the fall of 2007. Host surveys were completed by host museum staff from 2004 through 2007, as the *Initiative* exhibitions completed their runs at these museums. Site visits to *Initiative* exhibitions, including observations and interviews with visitors and interviews with host museum staff, began in 2005 and continued through 2007.

Respondents

Respondents for this study were selected in a variety of ways, determined by the needs of the study. The respondents for the host survey were host institution staff assigned to complete the survey by each institution that hosted an exhibition. These respondents included museum directors and department heads for education and exhibitions. Interview respondents were purposively chosen by the researchers according to standards for naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Producing museum staff were selected for interviews because they had been deeply involved in the development of their respective exhibitions. At the host museums, researchers endeavored to speak with both administrative staff who played a role in bringing the exhibition to their museum, and with staff who had spent many hours interacting with visitors in their *Initiative* exhibition. All interview and survey data were considered confidential, thus quotations included in the report are not attributed to any particular person or institution.

Most visitor respondents were purposively selected to ensure as broad a range of visitor experiences as possible. The decision to observe or interview a visitor group was based

on purposive sampling goals, as researchers strove to maximize the diversity of the sample on such characteristics as age, gender, social configuration, and ethnicity. Also, in some cases visitor groups were selected because they were stopped at an exhibit component that was of particular interest at that point in the research, or because they were engaged in a way that seemed likely to expand our understanding of an issue of interest to the researchers. Researchers adhered to standard professional practices for conducting research in museum settings, offering confidentiality to respondents and ensuring that the disruption of visitors' museum experiences was kept to a minimum.

In all, SRA staff devoted about 80 hours to reviewing the literature, 60 hours to document analysis, 120 hours to entering and analyzing the host survey data, and 35 hours to the interviews with museum staff. Researchers also completed about 120 visitor contact hours in the seven exhibitions, which included time for observing and interviewing visitors and for debriefing about the resulting data.

Analysis

Data analysis for this study has been an on-going process using a *modified inductive constant comparison* approach and *triangulation* of data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Inductive constant comparison takes each unit of data and systematically compares it to all previous units of data. Triangulation emphasizes the importance of looking at phenomena from a variety of vantage points and includes use of multiple researchers, multiple data sources, and multiple data collection methods.

Data analysis for the study began with the literature reviews and continued through the document analysis stage. For instance, during the literature reviews, ideas and concepts found in the initial references were elaborated or modified based on findings from newly located sources, which were compared to the previous findings. The systematic analysis of the summative evaluation reports served as a starting point for the investigation of how the *Initiative* contributed to American children's awareness and understandings of Asian cultures. All seven reports were examined, coded, and interpreted by a team of researchers. By analyzing and categorizing these data, researchers began to understand and articulate how the seven exhibitions worked, each in its own way, to meet the overarching goals of the *Initiative*. Although the focus was on understanding the outcomes and impacts of the seven exhibitions, the analysis also took into account the methodologies implicit in the seven studies, the research methods, researcher assumptions, and other information about how the summative studies were conducted in order to more fully understand the context of the evaluations. Using multiple researchers and group-debriefing sessions enhanced reliability and provided both another layer of analysis and the beginning of the synthesis of the findings by which the final conclusions were reached.

The results from these analyses helped shape and were, in turn, informed by interviews with museum staff and observations and interviews with museum visitors. For instance, data were triangulated by comparing findings about the summative evaluations with findings from the document and literature reviews, depth interviews with staff, surveys of host museums, and data collected during SRA's site visits to the exhibitions. This approach allowed the researchers to continually identify, develop, and refine categories and interesting themes as they emerged. Because of the iterative nature of the analysis, readers will not find a one-to-one correspondence between a piece of data and a conclusion or recommendation. Rather, the findings discussed in this report result from synthesized data, gathered from a variety of sources.

The seven chapters of this report include quotations taken directly from interview transcripts and host surveys to illustrate the themes and issues

that emerged during the research. These quotations were selected as examples of the range of ways in which respondents talked about the topic in question. However, the numbers of quotations used in the report does not represent the relative frequency or strength of a particular response.

Limitations

Due to resources available, this study was necessarily limited in scope. When conducting an evaluation study using naturalistic methodologies, it is standard practice to continue collecting data until a state of redundancy is reached. Redundancy is the point at which no new information is gleaned, despite repeated attempts to elicit additional findings. In this study redundancy was achieved for many of the issues listed in the topical framework. However, in some areas of the study researchers were unable to explore the issue in enough depth to reach redundancy. Issues that could not be resolved satisfactorily were either not included in the final report or were identified where appropriate in the report.

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See also Appendix D: Classified Bibliography for a listing of references and reports consulted during this study.

TOPICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ASIAN EXHIBIT INITIATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

Selinda Research Associates, Inc.
January 2005

A topical framework outlines all the topics and issues that will be explored during a study. The framework was developed by the *Initiative* research team in collaboration with ACM staff. The framework is phrased as a series of questions that will be answered during data collection and analysis (although generally not asked directly of visitors and other respondents).

1. **Impact on children's understanding of Asian cultures**. This section lists topics related to the primary research question, "What was the impact of the seven Freeman traveling exhibitions on American children's understanding of Asian cultures?"

    1.1. **Goals**. What goals and learning objectives were established for each exhibition? In what ways did these respond to, and go beyond, the Asian Exhibits Initiative (AEI) project goals?

        1.1.1. **Learning**. In what ways did the exhibit teams think about children's learning about culture? What types of learning did they strive for, and how did they try to facilitate that learning?

        1.1.2. **Developmental frameworks**. In what ways did the exhibition teams (and others at the producing museums) use the developmental frameworks? Which aspects of the frameworks were most useful? Which were least useful?

        1.1.3. **Topics and concepts**. What topics and concepts were covered by each of the seven exhibitions, and how did these choices support the goals of the exhibitions?

        1.1.4. **Exhibit and educational approaches**. What exhibit and educational approaches and techniques did each exhibit team use to accomplish their goals?

    1.2. **Achieving goals**. In what ways and to what extent did the individual exhibitions meet their own goals for visitor outcomes? In what ways and to what extent did the individual exhibitions meet The Freeman Foundation's and ACM's goals for the projects?

        1.2.1. **Engagement**. What did visitors do in the exhibitions? How did they engage physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally with the various aspects of the exhibitions?

        1.2.2. **Contributions**. What did visitors take away from their overall experiences? What sorts of meaning did they make in the exhibitions? What did they learn, how did their attitudes change, and so forth? How did these contributions vary with age, type of group, and so forth?

        1.2.3. **Children's perceptions**. What evidence is there that the AEI

exhibitions affected American children's perceptions of Asian cultures? In what ways and to what extent did children who visited AEI exhibitions think differently about Asian cultures?

1.2.4. **Families' perceptions**. How did these exhibitions affect families? In what ways did family perceptions of culture and Asian culture evolve as a result of visiting these exhibitions?

1.2.5. **Effectiveness of exhibition elements**. What were examples of particularly effective exhibit units in terms of achieving the exhibitions' goals? Why did these units seem to be successful, and what positive outcomes did they seem to produce?

1.3. **Programming**. What programs were developed in conjunction with the exhibitions, by both the producing and host museums?

1.3.1. **Effectiveness**. In what ways did these programs work well to support the goals of the exhibitions? What didn't work as well?

1.3.2. **Impact**. In what ways did programming support and extend the impacts of AEI?

1.4. **Larger impacts**. What other contributions did AEI make toward visitors' understandings of Asian cultures? What evidence is there that AEI affected American children's or adults' perceptions of culture in the larger sense (beyond an understanding of individual Asian cultures)?

2. **Importance of interactivity in children's exhibits about culture**. This section lists topics related to the secondary research question, "What was the impact of interactive exhibits on children's awareness and understanding of different cultures?"

2.1. **Exhibit development**. How did exhibit teams think about the concepts of interactivity and interactive exhibits as they developed the seven AEI exhibitions? In what ways did they incorporate concepts related to "context" during the exhibit development process? How did they think about the use of artifacts, stories, characters, and children's play in the exhibitions? And how did the fact that these are traveling exhibitions influence exhibit development decisions?

2.2. **Visitor experiences**. In what ways did interactivity affect visitors' experiences in the AEI exhibitions? In what ways and to what extent did children and other visitors engage with and respond to the interactive exhibit elements? What contributions to children's understanding of Asian cultures seemed specifically linked to the various types of interactives, or to the overall "interactive style" of the exhibitions?

2.3. **Overall contribution**. What is the overall contribution of interactivity to the success or lack of success of these exhibitions? In what ways and to what extent were interactives important in achieving the goals of the exhibitions?

3. **Impact on the children's museum field**. This section lists topics related to the secondary research question, "What was the impact of The Freeman Foundation initiative on the children's museum field?" We might want to broaden this question a bit: "What was the impact of The Freeman Foundation initiative on children's museums on various scales, from individual museum staff members, to museums, to the children's museum field as a whole?"

3.1. **Exhibit development**. In what ways and to what extent has AEI changed how the museums and their staff think about the development and design of cultural exhibitions and the use of evaluation in the exhibit process? In what ways and to what extent has the concept of developmental frameworks been adopted for other exhibitions and programs at producing or host museums? How has the Asian Exhibit Initiative changed how museums understand and think about culture, and about Asian cultures in particular?

3.2. **Museum audiences**. In what ways and to what extent did AEI impact the size and composition of audiences at the producing and host museums? In what ways and to what extent did AEI's impacts vary with such things as the producer vs. host, size of the museum, nature of its staff, emerging vs. established, and so forth?

3.3. **Educational infrastructure**. What new relationships have developed among and within children's museums and other cultural organizations as a result of AEI, and how likely is it that these will be sustained over time? In what ways has AEI been an investment in the larger informal educational infrastructure? What role has AEI played in building and strengthening the children's museum field as a significant contributor to informal learning?

4. **Recommendations**. Based on our findings, what recommendations can we make to ACM, The Freeman Foundation, and the children's museum field as a whole?

4.1. **Exhibit development**. What recommendations can we make about the development and design of cultural exhibitions and programs for children, including the use of developmental frameworks?

4.2. **Interactivity**. What recommendations can we make about the use of interactivity in cultural exhibitions for children and their families? What did we learn that helps inform the museum field?

4.3. **Learning outcomes**. What recommendations can we make about defining and evaluating learning outcomes for cultural exhibitions and programs for children and their families?

4.4. **Large-scale initiatives**. What recommendations can we make about large-scale initiatives that try to influence (1) institutional cultures within children's museums, and (2) children's and their families' perceptions of other cultures, especially Asian cultures?

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). *The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report*. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Appendix C:
HOST SURVEY DATA TABLES

To investigate the host museums' experiences with the *Initiative*, written surveys were completed by all museums that hosted an *Asian Exhibit Initiative* exhibition. The seven-page survey, included at the end this appendix, was developed in consultation with the ACM and covered a full range of issues related to hosting the exhibitions.

These tables include data from host surveys through all eleven rounds (72 host institutions). The last round concluded summer, 2008.

Citation: Selinda Research Associates, Inc. (2008). The Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative Research Report. Washington, DC: Association of Children's Museums.

Table C-1
Primary age ranges served by the host museums.

Lowest Age Targeted	Percentage of Host Museums	Highest Age Targeted	Percentage of Host Museums
Birth or 6 months	54 %	5 or 6 years	2 %
1 year	15 %	7 or 8 years	26 %
2 years	20 %	9 or 10 years	39 %
3 years	8 %	11 or 12 years	26 %
4 years	3 %	> 12 years	8 %

Note: Usable responses were recorded by 62 host museums.

Table C-2
Primary grade ranges served by the host museums.

Lowest Grade Targeted	Percentage of Host Museums	Highest Grade Targeted	Percentage of Host Museums
Preschool	72 %	1st or 2nd grade	13 %
Kindergarten	24 %	3rd or 4th grade	43 %
1st grade	3 %	5th or 6th grade	36 %
> 1st grade	1 %	> 6th grade	7%

Note: Usable responses were recorded by 67 host museums.

Table C-3
Host museums' annual operating budgets for the year they hosted the AEI exhibition.

Operating Budget	Percentage of Host Museums
$100,000 or under	1 %
$100,001 - $500,000	21 %
$500,000 – 1,000,000	22 %
Over $1,000,000	56 %

Note: All 72 host museums responded to this question.

Table C-4
Numbers of staff at host museums.

Type of Staff	Range	Mean	Median
Full time paid	0 – 185	21.8	14
Part time paid	0 – 300	30.6	20
Full time volunteer	0 – 15	8.9	0
Part time volunteer	0 – 1000 +	132.7	70

Note: All 72 host museums responded in at least two categories.

Table C-5
Annual attendance figures reported by host museums.

Number of People Who Visited the Previous Year	Percentage of Host Museums
< 50,0000	17 %
50,001 - 100,000	26 %
100,001 - 200,000	33 %
200,001 - 500,000	19 %
500,001 - 1,000,000	3 %
> 1,000,000	1 %

Note: All 72 host museums responded to this question.

Table C-6
Host museums' locations (self-selected from the following list of location types).

Type of Location	Percentage of Host Museums
Urban (major metropolitan area)	31 %
Urban (mid-size)	51 %
Suburban	18 %
Rural	1 %

Note: All 72 host museums responded to this question.

Table C-7
Host museums' involvement with cultural and multicultural exhibitions and programs.

Percentage Devoted to Each Category	Permanent Exhibits:Asian Cultures	Permanent Exhibits: Cultural or Multicultural	Programming: Cultural or Multicultural
None	63 %	25 %	1 %
< 10%	25 %	33 %	18 %
10-25%	8 %	28 %	44 %
26-50%	3 %	8 %	22 %
> 50%	0 %	7 %	14 %

Note: All 72 museums responded to these questions (although a few museums left one or two blank).

Table C-8
Frequency with which host museums developed or hosted traveling exhibitions with cultural or multicultural themes.

How Often Host Museums Develop or Host Traveling Exhibitions with Cultural or Multicultural Themes	Percentage of Host Museums
2-3 times a year	9 %
once a year	17 %
once every few years	52 %
never	23 %

Note: 66 host museums answered this question.

Table C-9
Ways in which host museums marketed their AEI exhibition in their area.

Method	Percentage of Host Museums
Museum website	99 %
Free publicity	93 %
Paid advertising	89 %
Other	69 %

Note: All 72 host museums responded in at least two categories. Examples of "Other" are listed in Table C-11.

Table C-10
Responses to the host survey question, "How helpful did you find the publicity information provided?"

Statement	Agree
Not Helpful	2 %
Somewhat Helpful	32 %
Very Helpful	45 %
Extremely Helpful	17 %

Note: 70 host museums responded to this question. 65 host museums (93%) responded that they had used the publicity materials

Table C-11
Additional ways that host museums marketed the AEI exhibition in their area.

By Medium:
Printed Materials:
Post cards
Newsletters
Fliers
Brochures
On the Street:
Street banners
Billboards
Posters
E-mail:
E-mail newsletters
"Blast" e-mails about the exhibition
Media
Conduct press previews, distribute press kits
Free TV pieces
Radio and TV interviews
Newspaper articles included local and regional Asian papers, high school newspapers
By Audience:
Marketing to Schools:
Teacher flyers
Educator Guide sent to educators within their region
E-mails to teachers
School mail within their region
Marketing to Members:
Previews
Museum newsletter
E-mail "blasts"
Postcards to all members
Marketing to Asian-American Communities:
Posters in predominantly Asian neighborhoods
Direct to local Asian cultural organizations (including churches, businesses)
Presented at local Asian festivals and celebrations (e.g., Tet celebration)
Marketing to Other Interest Groups:
Families with children who have been adopted internationally, particularly those from the culture represented in the exhibition, were invited to attend a special event
Posters in *anime* & *manga* stores
Postcards to all donors and all Chamber of Commerce members

Note: Selected responses from the 72 host surveys.

Table C-12
Responses to the host survey question, "How typical was this level of programming in comparison to other traveling exhibitions you have hosted?"

Statement	Agree
Less activity than the usual level done for other traveling exhibitions	5 %
The same level of activity than that done for other traveling exhibitions	37 %
More than the usual level of activity done for other traveling exhibitions	58 %

Note: 61 host museums responded to this question. Most of the 11 museums that did not respond specified that this was their first or second traveling exhibition, so they had no basis for comparison.

Table C-13
Responses to the host survey question, "How helpful did you find the educational material provided by the producing institution?"

Statement	Agree
Not Helpful	10 %
Somewhat Helpful	31 %
Very Helpful	40 %
Extremely Helpful	19 %

Note: 68 host museums responded to this question.

Table C-14
Types of special programming developed by the host museums

Informal Programming on the Museum Floor
Hands-on activities and crafts
Demonstrations
Storytime
Tastings
Games
Classes and Workshops:
More formal, for children and/or families
Day Camps:
Summer and vacation
Special Asian Theme for a Continuing Series: .
Daily, weekly, or monthly events that continued an existing series, but with an Asian theme
Readings by Authors of Children's Books
Programs for Schools and Other Organized Groups
School tours, facilitated field trips
Backpack activities
Programs developed for scout groups
Workshops for teachers.
After-school Programs
Outreach/Offsite Programs
Performances
By professional and/or amateur groups
By adults and/or children
Included dance, music/drumming, storytelling, acrobatics, martial arts, etc.
Included individual performances and/or series.
Film/Video Showings
Larger-Scale Special Events (often combined a number of the above formats)
Celebrations of exhibition landmarks:
Previews (for members, press, etc.)
Opening Night/Day events
Final Weeks/Weekend events
Celebrations of Asian holidays (e.g., Tet, Mid Autumn Festival, New Years)
International festivals (multicultural, Asian cultural festivals)
Annual fund-raising events given an Asian theme
Other special events: Arts and crafts days, Family Weekends

Note: Selected responses from the 72 host surveys.

Table C-15
Attendance at *Asian Exhibit Initiative* Exhibitions as Reported on the Host Surveys

Visitation data from the 70 host museums that provided attendance data:

Total Asian Exhibit Initiative attendance: 3,325,633
Mean Asian Exhibit Initiative attendance: 47,510
Median Asian Exhibit Initiative attendance: 36,638

Projected attendance if all 72 host museums had provided data (using three-month average for those that did not):

Total: 3,400,000

Note 1: If attendance at the initial venues at the producing museums were counted in this total, the overall total might approach 4 million visitors.

Total attendance during the *Asian Exhibit Initiative* time interval for the 60 host museums that were in the same building three straight years:

Asian Exhibit Initiative year: 2,779,487 (0.4 % decrease from previous year)
Same time period, previous year: 2,790,249 (4.5 % increase over the previous year)
Same time period, two years before: 2,669,361

Percentage of host museums reporting an increase over the previous year: 65 %
Percentage of host museums reporting an increase over two years before: 58 %

Note 2: Blockbuster travelling exhibitions at a few museums inflated the "previous year" attendance figures. That's why the majority of host museums reported at least a slight increase in attendance during the Asian Exhibit Initiative *year, yet the total attendance figures were a bit less than the previous year.)*

Visitation data by exhibition as reported by host museums (followed by number of host museums reporting visitation data):

Monkey King: A Journey to China	521,538	(9 of 10)
Hmong at Heart	197,652	(10 of 10)
Song of Korea	265,612	(10 of 10)
Dragons and Fairies: Exploring Viet Nam through Folktales	560,028	(10 of 10)
Five Friends from Japan: Children in Japan Today	794,914	(11 of 11)
Japan and Nature: Spirit of the Seasons	424,164	(10 of 10)
Jump to Japan: Discovering Culture through Popular Art	561,725	(10 of 11)

Note 3: By design, the seven exhibitions were different sizes and traveled to different size museums. The size differences in host museums probably account for most of the differences in visitation figures.

Table C-16
Responses to the host survey question, "How important were each of the following factors in your institution's decision to host this exhibition? Please rate each one."

Factors	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Because it was a cultural exhibition	7 %	17 %	38 %	39 %
Because it was specifically about an Asian culture	12 %	45 %	23 %	20 %
Because our institution relies on traveling exhibitions to maintain attendance levels	30 %	28 %	27 %	15 %
Thought exhibition would be important outreach to local Asian audience(s)	0 %	31 %	37 %	32 %
Because the exhibition fits in with our institution's strategic goals	6 %	15 %	49 %	31 %
Because expected we would receive monetary support from ACM for this exhibition	7 %	19 %	44 %	30 %
Because expected we would receive a high level of exhibit and educational support from the producing institution	1 %	39 %	34 %	26 %
Because of the high profile of the *Go East!* Exhibits Initiative	13 %	38 %	33 %	17 %

Note: All 72 host museums responded to these questions (although a few museums left one or two blank).

Table C-17
Responses to the host survey question, "Please respond to the following by checking the appropriate box for each statement."

Statement	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree
The exhibition increased our institution's overall visibility	4 %	15 %	35 %	46 %
The exhibition increased our institution's awareness of culture-related exhibitions	7 %	14 %	33 %	46 %
The exhibition provided professional development opportunities for our staff	3 %	14 %	54 %	30 %
The exhibition provided our institution with opportunities for collaboration with other children's museums	13 %	30 %	34 %	24 %
The exhibition provided networking opportunities with other children's museums	7 %	19 %	44 %	29 %
The exhibition provided networking opportunities with other community organizations	1 %	7 %	25 %	67 %

Note: All 72 host museums responded to these questions (although a few museums left one or two blank).

ASIAN EXHIBIT INITIATIVE: HOST MUSEUM SURVEY

Selinda Research Associates is working with the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) to understand the impact of *Go East!* As a host institution, your input is critical in the assessment process.

All information you provide is confidential. Your institution's specific responses will remain anonymous and won't be disclosed to anyone. **If you have any questions please contact Selinda Research Associates, Inc., at OfficeManager@SelindaResearch.com or call (312) 986-1134**.

Date _____

Contact Name _____ Title _____

Name of Institution _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email address _____

I. *Go East!*

Which *Go East!* exhibition did you host?

- □ Dragons and Fairies: Exploring Vietnam through Folk Tales
- □ Five Friends from Japan: Children in Japan Today
- □ Hmong at Heart
- □ Japan and Nature: Spirits of the Seasons
- □ Jump to Japan: Discovering Culture through Japanese Art
- □ Monkey King: A Journey to China
- □ Song of Korea

What were the dates you hosted this exhibition at your institution? (MM/YY – MM/YY)

_____

II. Deciding to Host the *Go East!* Exhibition

How important were each of the following factors in your institution's decision to host this exhibition? Please rate **each** one.

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Because it was a cultural exhibition	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because it was specifically about an Asian culture	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because our institution relies on traveling exhibitions to maintain attendance levels	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thought exhibition would be important outreach to local Asian audience(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because the exhibition fits in with our institution's strategic goals	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because expected we would receive monetary support from ACM for this exhibition	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because expected we would receive a high level of exhibit and educational support from the producing institution	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because of the high profile of the *Go East!* Exhibits Initiative	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please share other reasons that were important in your institution's decision to host this exhibition __

_____

_____

_____

III. Marketing and Attendance for the *Go East!* Exhibition

List total visitation during the entire time the exhibit was at your museum:	List total visitation for the same time frame during the previous year:	List total visitation for same time frame the year before that
_____	_____	_____

Did the exhibition draw different types of visitors other than your typical audience?

□ Yes □ No

If yes, please describe: _____

_____

How did you market the exhibition in your area? Please check all that apply

□ Museum website □ Paid advertising

□ Free publicity □ other (please specify) _____

Did you use the publicity information provided by the museum who produced the exhibition you hosted?

□ Yes □ No □ NA

How helpful did you find the publicity information provided?

Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Very Helpful	Extremely Helpful
□	□	□	□

IV. Programming Related to the *Go East!* Exhibition

Did you hold special educational programs related to the *Go East!* exhibit you hosted?

□ Yes □ No

If yes, please list which you held: _____

_____

_____

How typical was this level of programming in comparison to other traveling exhibitions you have hosted?

□ Less activity than the usual level done for other traveling exhibitions

□ The same level of activity than that done for other traveling exhibitions

□ More than the usual level of activity done for other traveling exhibitions

How helpful did you find the educational material provided by the producing institution?

Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Very Helpful	Extremely Helpful
□	□	□	□

Did you develop any additional exhibitions or programming related to the *Go East!* traveling exhibit you hosted?

□ Yes □ No

If yes, please describe: _____

_____

_____

V. Impacts of the *Go East!* Exhibit Initiative on Your Institution

Please respond to the following by checking the appropriate box for each statement.

	Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Tend to Agree	Agree
The exhibition increased our institution's overall visibility	□	□	□	□
The exhibition increased our institution's awareness of culture-related exhibitions	□	□	□	□
The exhibition provided professional development opportunities for our staff	□	□	□	□
The exhibition provided our institution with opportunities for collaboration with other children's museums	□	□	□	□
The exhibition provided networking opportunities with other children's museums	□	□	□	□
The exhibition provided networking opportunities with other community organizations	□	□	□	□

Did this exhibition meet your institution's expectations about the contributions/impact the exhibit would have on your organization?

□ Yes □ No

Please tell us more about your institution's expectations, and in what ways they were met or not met

_____

_____

What was the most significant impact(s) or influence of this exhibition on your institution? _____

_____

Please share additional thoughts that can help us understand the overall impact or influence of the exhibition on your institution. _____

_____

VI. Recap Questions

The best thing for our institution about hosting this exhibition was: _____

_____

The most challenging aspect of hosting this exhibition was: _____

_____

What long-lasting effects, if any, does your institution believe the Go East! Initiative will have on the children's museum field? _____

VII. Background

What is your annual operating budget for this year:

□ $100,000 or under □ $100,001 - $500,000 □ $500,000 – 1,000,000 □ Over 1,000,000

Check which best describes your museum's location:

□ Urban (mid-size) □ Urban (major metropolitan area) □ Suburban □ Rural

Please write in the number of staff at your institution

Full time paid _____ Full time volunteer_____

Part time paid _____ Part time volunteer_____

How many people visited your institution last year? (do not count school groups) _____

How many school groups visited your institution last year? _____

Check all primary target audiences:

□ Families - list primary age range served _____

□ School groups – list primary grades served _____

□ Other – please _____

Please share any other pertinent information about the audiences you serve (e.g., race/ethnicity, geographic distribution, etc.) _____

_____

What percent of your permanent exhibits are devoted to cultural or multicultural topics?

□ None □ < 10% □ 10-25% □ 26-50% □ more than 50%

What percent of your programming is about cultural or multicultural themes?

□ None □ < 10% □ 10-25% □ 26-50% □ more than 50%

What percent of your permanent exhibitions are devoted to Asian cultures?

□ None □ < 10% □ 10-25% □ 26-50% □ more than 50%

Please describe: _____

_____

About how often do you develop or host traveling exhibitions with cultural or multicultural themes?

□ 2-3 times a year □ once a year □ once every few years □ never

Please list examples: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Please fax completed survey to Selinda Research Associates, Inc. at (312) 986-1213

Appendix D:
CLASSIFIED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Table of Contents

EVALUATION AND RELATED REPORTS FOR THE SEVEN EXHIBITIONS

Monkey King: A Journey to China
produced by Children's Museum of Manhattan

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Hmong at Heart
produced by Madison Children's Museum

Coleman, H. L. K., & Karcher, M. J. (2003, May). *Developmental framework for planning cultural exhibits for children* (Unpublished manuscript). WI: Madison Children's Museum. TX: Austin Children's Museum.

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