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Adult Education in Archaeological Open-Air Museums – a Reader

by Dorothee Olthof

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Introduction

In an average archaeological open air museum there is a lot to do and see for children and there are plenty of programs for school groups. The kids can grind cereals, bake bread, help in the garden, make bracelets out of various materials or try to make fire without matches. Sometimes they can even spend the night in the museum and experience what it's like to sleep in a 'prehistoric' bed. Excellent! But why are the matching programs for adults so rare? Adults can join a guided tour or perhaps attend a lecture, if they're lucky. Does this mean that archaeology and knowledge about the past are for children only? Surely not.



This reader presents ideas about adult education in archaeological open air museums (AOAMs) and best practices as seen in museums throughout Europe. It is meant to inspire and give ideas, so visitors of all ages can have a satisfying and meaningful day out in our beautiful museums.

1. Why should we have adult education in archaeological open air museums?

There are a number of reasons why AOAMs should pay more attention to their adult visitors, ranging from idealistic to quite economic ones:

- Museums are institutions of lifelong learning. People of all ages can find something to their interest there. Lifelong learning is not limited to schools and other official educational institutes. It includes learning through experience, places and people. Adult education is a part of that (Hooper-Greenhill 1995).
- As a community resource, museums have a responsibility to provide educational opportunities for a wider audience than just schools (Kalloniatis 1995). Many museums are financed by public funds. It's only fair to give the adult public a good run for their money!
- It helps to establish a museum as a place of interest and relevance to all and its social, economic and cultural value for the community. In other words: to confirm why society needs museums (Hooper-Greenhill 1995). Something worth promoting in these times of pressure on museum funding.
- It is vital for the future standing and survival of open air museums, as something significantly more than pleasure parks, that we show initiative and a willingness to participate in a task (adult education) that binds us to the development of the community (Zipsane 2005).
- By designing special programs for adults, museums can widen their audiences, which could lead to higher numbers of visitors, more 'friends' of the museum, a sound basis in their community, and they in their turn can learn something from the adult

learners as well. Because you can bet that there is relevant expert knowledge out there in the world of adults! (Bown 1995)

- Because we can: in AOAM's there is a lot of knowledge present, and adult visitors are interested in the topic (otherwise they probably wouldn't be there), so it must be possible to make a match.

2. What is adult education?

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) defines it as follows:

“Lifelong learning is a necessary component for people to contribute creatively to their communities and to live in independent and democratic societies. Adult and lifelong learning are deeply linked to social and economic justice; equality of gender relations; the universal right to learn; living in harmony with the environment; respect for human rights; recognition of cultural diversity; peace; and the active involvement of women and men in decisions affecting their lives.” <http://www.icae2.org/?q=en/about>

In short: adult education should be liberating and empowering (Brown 1995).

Adult education in museums encompasses many different things:

- all facilities, services and activities, such as teaching programs and publications, provided for formal or non-formal educational users incl. adults, whether as individuals or in groups
- facilities, services and activities, such as talks and trails, for informal educational users incl. adults
- the educational dimension of important museum functions such as gallery and exhibition displays, where structured learning is a principal objective
- the education of museum staff as adult learners
- self-education by adults outside any institutional framework (Anderson 1995)

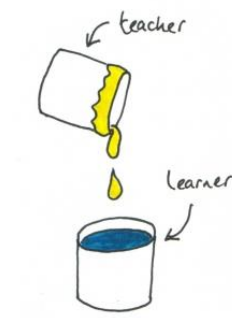
Note: some explanation of the terms used above is perhaps needed

- Lifelong learning: learning in which we engage throughout our lives
- Formal learning: learning that takes place in a formal education or training setting, normally leading to a qualification
- Non-formal learning: learning that is structured and organized but does not lead to a qualification
- Informal learning: learning that occurs through family, social or civic life, not necessarily intentionally

So, it can range from regular classes about a certain subject delivered by a teacher to a group of adults, or craft workshops for museum staff to single visitors coming to the museum because they want to know more about Stone Age farming, for instance.

Before we explore this subject further, we need to think a bit about the phenomenon of education and learning. Beware, it's going to be philosophical and theoretical!

3. Education vs. learning, and theories of learning



Education and learning is not the same! The traditional view on education sees the learner as a vessel into which information can be poured. So the learner is passive, a *tabula rasa*, just absorbing what the teacher chooses to tell, memorizing facts.

Learning, on the other hand, is an active process in which the learner interacts with his/her environment. Not only the written word is important, but also experience, interaction with objects, with other people, use of all the senses. It involves thought, language, a context of existing knowledge and understanding (Hein 1998, Wood 1995).

In the 20th century there were quite a few researchers who spent a lot of thought on theories of learning. Famous names are Dewey (experiential education), Piaget (cognitive development), Kolb (experiential learning) and Gardner (multiple intelligences). In modern museum education (and some schools) Kolb's and/or Gardner's theories are increasingly used and they are quite easily applicable to AOAM's.

The following websites contain useful information about their theories:

www.learning-theories.com

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_styles

www.funderstanding.com/theories.cfm

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/gardner.htm>

<http://www.literacyworks.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html> (multiple intelligence test)

Implicitly you probably have some kind of learning theory in your head as well, some idea how you think people (should) learn, perhaps based on your own experiences as a learner. In order to design effective educational programs it is necessary, however, to make these ideas explicit, so you can work with them. Museums need to have a conscious educational policy. The following bit of theory may help.

There are roughly two theories of knowledge:

1. Knowledge is 'out there' in the world, independent of the learner (realism)
2. Knowledge exists only in the minds of people (idealism)

The way a museum sees itself and its collection in this light will determine how it will present the collection to the public. A museum that believes in theory 1 thinks that it teaches the truth to visitors, independent of their pre-existing knowledge, experience, cultural background etc. A museum that follows theory 2 thinks that knowledge is relative, is influenced by culture and personal experience, and needs to be interpreted and explained, depending on purpose, use and situation.

There are also two contrasting positions in theories of learning:

1. Learners are vessels to be filled with knowledge; people learn by absorbing information that has been transmitted to them; they learn in small pieces, step-by-step, adding new

items to their storehouse of information. This idea of learning dominates teaching practice in schools and universities, as it has done for the past 100 years.

2. People actively construct knowledge; learning requires an active mind, making sense of all the phenomena presented to it.

The combination of a theory of knowledge and a theory of learning leads to four different educational theories:

1. *Didactic, expository education (combination of knowledge and learning theory 1):* 'school' learning: teacher (or textbook, exhibition, etc.) presents what is to be learned to the students, in an orderly fashion and small steps, from simple to complex. Exhibitions organized along these lines will have a clear beginning and end, and an intended order; they will have didactic components (labels, panels) that describe what is to be learned from the exhibition; they show subjects from simple to complex. They are 'telling a story' that is 'true'. Not likely to present alternative ideas.

2. *Stimulus-response education (combination of knowledge theory 2 and learning theory 1):* think of Pavlov! This theory views learning as a passive process, but makes no claims for the objective truth of what is learned. Exhibitions along these lines will also have labels and panels and will also have a clear beginning and end and an intended order for pedagogic purposes. In addition they will impress the stimulus on the learner and reward correct answers (for instance, small lights that appear when you push the right buttons or other means of praise). Without claims to the truth. Not many museums will go this way. Some that do may be accused of 'propaganda'.

3. *Discovery learning (combination of knowledge theory 1 and learning theory 2):* attention is focused on the learner as well as, or rather than, on the subject. Learning is an active process that changes learners. They discover things. Often, this is confused with 'hands-on' activities. But the activity meant is mental activity (which can, of course, be stimulated by physical activity, but not by 'mindless' actions). The idea is that by exposing students to the phenomena of the world, they will arrive automatically at the truth about the world. 'Finding out for yourself', 'learning by doing'. Very suitable for museums, who value learning from objects. *But there are serious problems:* learners are supposed to learn by themselves, actively constructing, but they are supposed to arrive at conclusions determined by others (the 'truth'). That will probably not work...unless you prepare the 'experiments' to such an extent that they can't go wrong and the student will inevitably arrive at the appropriate conclusion. But then it's not really an experiment anymore and it's rather a kind of hands-on didactic, expository education.

Nevertheless, it has its appeal, especially to museums, who can design exhibitions that

- Allow exploration, going back and forth
- Have a wide range of active learning modes
- Didactic components (labels, panels) that ask questions, prompt visitors to find out for themselves
- School programs with activities intended to lead the students to accepted conclusions

4. *Constructivism (combination of knowledge theory 2 and learning theory 2)*: learners use both their hands and minds, interact with the world, manipulate it, reach conclusions, experiment and increase their understanding. The conclusions reached by the learner are not validated by whether or not they conform to some external standard of truth, but whether they make sense within the constructed reality of the learner.

People create their own meaning out of the evidence at hand. For instance, what one person sees as a trustworthy politician is a liar to someone else. The same thing happens at exhibitions: people bring their own ideas, knowledge and culture with them to the museum and see the artifacts with different eyes/make their own meanings of what they see.

A constructivist exhibition will

- Have many entry points, no specific path, no beginning and end
- Provide a wide range of active learning modes
- Present a range of points of view
- Enable visitors to connect with objects (and ideas) through a range of activities and experiences that make use of their life experiences
- Provide experiences and materials that allow learners to experiment, design theories and draw conclusions

The four theories of education lead to four theories of teaching:

How do you bring across the message in all the four ways of learning mentioned above?

1. *Expository-didactic education*: the focus is on the subject. The way to teach something is to analyze it and then to present it. Pedagogic challenge: to find the essential structure of the subject and to find the individual units that can be most easily learned.

2. *Stimulus-response education*: it is important only that the teacher have a clear idea of what should be learned. The focus is on method, independent of the context of its application/the subject.

3. *Discovery learning*: requires active learning situation. BUT: unless the mind is also engaged, unless activities challenge ideas, lead to cognitive uncertainty, and stretch the beliefs held previously, hands-on by itself doesn't lead anywhere. The pedagogy should include reference to the ideas and concepts that are intended to be taught, as activity and insight that don't lead to the desired theory are not acceptable.

4. *Constructivism*: the challenge is to find experiences that stimulate and challenge (as with discovery learning). And the environment has to be one in which the learner can make connections with things/ideas/activities he already knows. Constructivist museum education policy: not linear. The visitor/learner can choose his/her own topic and route (Hein 1998).

4. How do adults learn?

Most museums have extensive experience with teaching children in school groups. Some of this knowledge is also applicable to adults. Both adults and children:

- would like to be treated with courtesy and respect
- enjoy contributing their own knowledge, experience and opinions to the learning process

- appreciate having an element of choice in the learning process
- do not want to be talked down to or patronized
- have diverse learning styles
(Gibbs et al. 2007)

However, there are also important differences between children and adult learners that museum educators should be aware of:

- adults usually engage in learning activities voluntarily (whereas children have to go to school)
- they bring with them their accumulated life experiences and knowledge, responsibilities and former education; their learning is affected by these prior experiences and competing interests
- they like their learning activities to be problem-centered, meaningful to their lives, and immediately applicable
- effective learning is linked to the adults self-concept of him/herself as a learner
- adults tend towards self-directedness in their learning
- adults need to be actively involved in the learning process
- adult education is a partnership: not something done to or for adults by the museum, but a partnership that enables adults to do something for the museum. For instance, share their memories or knowledge about a certain theme
- adults often learn best in groups that they join by choice, groups characterized by discussion, interaction and collaboration and in which participants both receive and provide academic and social support
(Anderson 1995, Wood 1995)

Adults are a heterogeneous group: they have different experiences and levels of education, personal circumstances, reasons to subject themselves to adult education, levels of fitness and health and varied cultural backgrounds. As they usually subject themselves to educational activities voluntarily, they can also choose to leave or cease to attend if they don't like what's being offered. This gives them a kind of power and authority that school children don't have. Adult educators have to structure their teaching accordingly: they must enter into a partnership with their students and cannot exercise authority like a school-teacher. The following elements are very important in adult education:

- non-prescriptive
- continuous negotiation
- shared individual and group responsibility for learning
- valuing process as part of learning
- mutual respect
(Jones 1995)

5. How do people learn in a museum?

Museums are institutions of lifelong learning, but not many adult visitors go there with the primary objective of learning in mind (at least, not for themselves). They want to have a nice day out, meet friends or family, shelter from the rain, or they think it's educational for their children. They often visit museums in social groups, mostly family groups of varying ages. And they spend comparatively little time there. Still, and this is the amazing thing about

museums, they always seem to learn something from their visit, however casual it is. How does this work, what do people learn in a museum?

Museum learning should not be confused with school education. In the latter, learning specific facts and concepts is very important. Usually, people don't spend enough time in a museum to allow for this kind of knowledge to form. But what visitors do in museums is 'making meaning': they construct an understanding from what they see, touch and do. Often this understanding is not what the curator intended with the exhibition, but it is related to it and comes from interaction with the exhibition (Hein 1998).

People can only 'make meaning', learn, if what they see in the museum is somehow connected to their own lives, to things they already know. If you see some unknown object in a showcase with a label in a language you can't read, it is very difficult to make something meaningful out of it. So it is very important that museums provide this link between the known and the unknown. They can do this in many different ways, for instance by putting modern tools next to their prehistoric equivalents, or by letting the local community help with the development of exhibitions (Bown 1995, Hein 1998, Wood 1995).

Other important elements of learning are wonder, exploration, expanding the mind, providing new, cognitively dissonant (intellectually shocking) and aesthetic experiences. This is something museums can do very well.

As we have seen above, people learn in many different ways (Gardner's multiple intelligences). Museums that let their visitors use as many senses as possible (view, touch, smell, sound and taste and mind) do their visitors a big favor.

According to Perry (1992), a successful museum experience that leads to learning includes six factors:

- Curiosity – the visitor is surprised and intrigued
- Confidence – the visitor has a sense of competence
- Challenge – the visitor perceives that there is something to work towards
- Control – the visitor has a sense of self-determination and control
- Play – the visitor experiences sensory enjoyment and playfulness
- Communication – the visitor engages in meaningful social interaction

On order to increase the confidence and control of the visitor it is very important that visitors feel comfortable in the museum. Uncomfortable people can't learn. Visitor comfort means physical comfort (places to sit, clean toilets etc.) and psychological comfort (orientation, lighting, crowds, noise, placement of exits and entrances all have effect on visitor comfort).

Clear orientation is vital: before people can start to learn, they need to know where they are. So signs, maps, color codes, staff who can explain and answer all questions are very important.

Also, informing visitors explicitly in advance what they are going to see, what they might find, or what the intention of the exhibition is, makes visitors more comfortable, more able to engage with the exhibition, and, therefore, better able to learn (Hein 1998).

Learning takes time. A simple way to let visitors stay longer in an exhibition/museum: provide seating.

Adults often learn best in groups that they join by choice, groups characterized by discussion, interaction and collaboration and in which participants both receive and provide academic and social support. So make sure you provide for social interaction and design spaces and organize programs that promote learning as a social activity (Hein 1998).

Some useful and powerful techniques to make the museum accessible (intellectually and physically):

- Use all the senses, so people with one sense less (i.e. blind people) can still use the other ones
- The use of drama/live interpretation
- Provide resources of different types (books, computers, merchandise) so motivated visitors can continue their interaction with the subject of the exhibition (Hein 1998)

If you want to read more, take a look here:

<http://www.lemproject.eu/library/books-papers>

<http://www.museumlearning.org/>

<http://www.museumlearning.org/paperresearch.html>

6. Possibilities of adult education in AOAMs; ideas, tips and best practices

An archaeological Open Air Museum is a very special kind of museum. It offers a three-dimensional look into life in the past. Visitors can touch, feel, see, smell and sometimes even taste what life may have been like for our ancestors. This gives AOAMs an immediacy which no other learning source (books, television, radio) can offer: they are all 'second-hand', compared to an AOAM. People can experience things for themselves, without having to read large pieces of text and without glass between them and the exhibits. All museums are good places for learning from objects and learning by doing, but AOAMs especially so.

This makes them excellent places for discovery learning or a constructivist approach to (adult) education (depending on the theory of knowledge adhered to by the museum). The museum environment is perfectly suited to the development of divergent thinking and creative intelligence (but is in fact often used to try to promote fact-oriented convergent thinking (the ability to give the 'correct' answer, like in multiple-choice tests http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convergent_thinking)). Learning from objects is also available to people who can't read (either because they are illiterate or because they speak a different language). A new vocation for the AOAMs?

It is important, however, to remember the following:

“All genuine education comes from experience, but not all experience is educative. Routine experiences that do not challenge and stimulate us may not be educative. Not only ‘hands-on’, but also ‘minds-on’ “ (Hein 1998)

There are many ways in which AOAMs can design meaningful adult education programs. It is relatively easy to facilitate diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences in these museums, by means of different kinds of activities (demonstrations, hands-on activities, guided tours etc.) and sources of information (for instance, guidebooks, objects and staff to talk to). The rich environment of these museums can be used to cater for many different groups of adults, ranging from office parties and family groups to interested individuals. The following paragraphs present some of the possibilities and the best practices contributed by the Zeitgeist-partners.

Ideas for programs for informal learning

In fact, an AOAM with good reconstructions, gardens, animals and well-trained staff offering various demonstrations and activities is an informal program in itself, where visitors of all ages and learning styles can find something that appeals to them, so they can learn.

Archeon, in addition, offers free guided tours to all visitors:

In all our eras (Prehistory, Roman Era, Middle Ages) we offer a guided tour. This will lead the participants through the different time periods within that era and along all the reconstructed buildings we have from that period.



This program is offered daily to all our visitors for free and it is the most informative program that we provide. This tour can also be requested as a guided tour through our whole park.

Number of participants per tour: 5-40 (15-20 preferred)

How many times executed in a year: ± 3 tours daily offered

± 50 booked

± 20 tour through whole park

For groups and parties, there are some more options:

Active Tour

Groups can order an ‘active’ tour in all of our eras (Prehistory, Roman Era, Middle Ages). This will involve a tour through the different time periods, just like the guided tour, but there will also be a lot of activities in between, dependent on the era in which the tour is given: felting, shooting with a bow and arrow, making a small bronze ornament, using flint and steel or wood friction to make fire, making a small candle or making a copper fibula, for instance.



Number of participants per tour: 5-23 (\pm 15 preferred)

How many times executed in a year: \pm 350 times

Roman Teambuilding

This is a very active program for adults. They'll be divided in two or more groups and will have to compete in a series of exercises like building a tent, dressing a roman soldier and "Walking the 'A'-frame".

Number of participants per group: 5-15 (8-10 preferred)

How many times executed in a year: \pm 100 times



Living history events can also be good opportunities for informal adult education. When the museum comes alive with Viking warriors, medieval knights and ladies or Roman soldiers and civilians, there are plenty of opportunities for all ages and learning styles to be engaged. An essential prerequisite in this case are really good re-enactors, who actually interact with the public in a meaningful way. Too often we see sleeping Vikings, gossiping ladies and

Romans on their smoking break during such events...

Many adults visit AOAMs in a family group, with their children. They do this for social reasons: to relate to one another in a purposeful context. Parents are often the guides of their children in a museum. The learning needs of adults and children are not identical, but together they can learn in new and refreshing ways. Children may trigger adults to see things in a different light. For a family to learn together, opportunities for cooperative activities must be created. It may be a good idea to organize family events/activities instead of (or in addition to) children's activities.

The Historic Open Air Museum Eindhoven (NL), for instance, organizes weekends about 'prehistoric living' for families. During these weekends the participants, sleep in an Iron Age farm, cook their own food and learn some ancient crafts (<http://www.homeindhoven.nl/>). The same thing happens in Lejre, Land of Legends (DK), where families can spend their summer holidays as Iron Age or 19th Century farmers (<http://www.sagnlandet.dk/>).



On the other hand, adults also need (at least a little) time to pursue their own interests. So it may be an equally good idea to provide supervised children's activities or perhaps even a crèche. Anything which makes a family outing to a museum easy, pleasant and fun is truly an

aid to learning, even simple things like clean toilets, baby-changing facilities, affordable and good food and children's souvenirs in the shop (Wood 1995).

AOAMs should also be able to provide informal learning opportunities for disabled visitors, not only in the way of elevators and ramps for wheelchairs, but also accessibility to the contents of the exhibitions. Signs or guidebooks in Braille, audio tours, things to touch for blind people, for instance, or guides who can converse in sign language for deaf people. And what can we do for the mentally disabled?

Ideas for programs for non-formal learning

Non-formal learning in AOAM's can take the form of practical courses or workshops. The AFM Oerlinghausen offers the following surprising workshops:

Forging for women

Often, courses about metal working are dominated by men. Women don't always feel at home during such workshops, even though they are interested in the craft. By designing courses especially for women we solved this problem.

<http://www.afm->

[oerlinghausen.de/index.php/de/einzelbesucher/kurseseminare/100-schmiedekurs.html](http://www.afm-oerlinghausen.de/index.php/de/einzelbesucher/kurseseminare/100-schmiedekurs.html)



Textiles for men

A group of women can be equally intimidating, so there's also a textiles course for men!

Making bow and arrows

Participants can make their own bow and learn how to shoot with it. To keep up their skills, the museum invites the participants of these courses every second Friday of the month to come and practice in the museum. This way, a whole community of archers (and friends of the museum!) has been established.



The course is also offered as a special activity for fathers and sons, in adaptation of modern family life, with many split families.

<http://www.afm-oerlinghausen.de/index.php/de/einzelbesucher/kurseseminare/99-holzbogenschiessen.html>

During all workshops, that usually take two days, drinks and lunch are included, so the participants can concentrate fully on their work. The workshops are taught by experienced crafts people and much attention is paid to the historical backgrounds and the use of good quality materials and tools. The goal of these workshops is not only to teach the participants ancient crafts, but also to create more goodwill for the museum: enthusiastic participants will tell their friends and family about their good experiences.

In addition to organizing their own courses and workshops, AOAMs could also work together with local institutions for adult education, like folk high schools or other museums. They could learn from each other's expertise and offer courses with an extra dimension. The following examples are from (regular) museums in England:

- Courses in a museum for adults learning English as a second language: hands-on activities, training conversation skills
- Historic crafts course for women with little previous education (students come from different cultural backgrounds) (Kalloniatis 1995)

Many cross-overs like this can be thought of: a local history course that uses the AOAM as starting point, a course on medieval art or history can illustrate the daily life of that period beautifully in a medieval open air museum, a course on architecture explores (pre)historic architecture in the local AOAM etc. etc. The museum is not just a nice background for the theory, but can add an extra, active, three-dimensional, interesting and stimulating dimension.

It is also possible to take the educational activities outside the museum and go into the community to reach a public that normally wouldn't or couldn't go to the museum (for instance patients in a hospital or minority groups) (Hooper-Greenhill 1995).

Ideas for programs for formal learning

There are examples of museums who work together with universities and other formal adult education institutes to offer courses that lead to specific qualifications. In the case of AOAM's we could think about working together with universities that offer archaeology as a subject. Or with teacher training schools, to teach future teachers about practical (pre)history. Lejre, Land of Legends (DK), for instance, cooperates with the University of Copenhagen. Together they offer a course on 'Experimental Archaeology, Ethno-archaeology and Simple Technology' to all students at BA level (Lyngstrøm 2011).

One last idea:

Focus on the local community: most museums and adult education institutes are visited by people who live within a travelling time of 30 minutes of the venue. Understand issues and interests of local communities and see how your museum can contribute to them. And train your staff, so they are aware of adult learners' needs (Wood 1995).

7. The importance of evaluations

Visitor surveys and evaluations should be an integral part of adult education in AOAMs. Most museums know remarkably little about the needs of their visitors. This is strange, because, obviously, it is important to know who your visitors are and what they want, before you can design an appropriate educational program for them.

After you have run a program, it's interesting to know how successful it was, whether all the effort was worth the while. Evaluation should therefore be a part of adult education. The data gained would improve professional practice, provide statistics in terms of numbers

participating, would demonstrate the changes in perception, the growth of confidence, the opening up of new ideas, the greater sophistication of concepts, the increased skills, the greater knowledge of collections etc. The quality of the experience is important, not only the visitor numbers! (Hooper-Greenhill 1995) This way, not only the visitor will learn in the museum, but the staff as well. And they can improve their practice (Hein 1998).

There is a lot of literature about visitor surveys and evaluation processes that goes way beyond the scope of this reader. A good starting point can be:

Hein, G.E., 1998: *Learning in the Museum*, Museum Meanings Series, New York

<http://visitorstudies.org/resources>

Conclusion

There are many good reasons for AOAMs to engage in adult education. In fact, most museums already do, in some way or another. But they underestimate their role as (potential) educational institutions. Not all (do any?) museums have staff whose sole responsibility is education. And in how many museums is this work done by specialist educators with an intimate knowledge of learning theories and a proper training in education?

In order to create effective educational/learning programs museums need to have a conscious educational policy based on theories of knowledge, learning and teaching. Besides, they need to know who their visitors are and what they want. Museum staff has to be aware of the needs of adult learners and the differences between children and adults, so they can treat their adult learners appropriately.

Not many adults visit museums with a clear learning objective in mind. The majority of the visitors want to enjoy themselves, meet family and friends, have a nice day out. And still, they learn! Museum learning, however, is not about memorizing facts or reproducing figures in the way of school education. It is about 'making meaning', constructing understanding. In order to do this, visitors have to be able to connect what they see to their own lives, to their former experiences and knowledge.

Archaeological Open Air Museums, with their three-dimensional settings, engaging all the senses and easily adaptable to many different learning styles, are a perfect setting for adult learning in a variety of ways. The possibilities range from informal learning during casual visits and events, non-formal learning during workshops or courses to formal learning programs in cooperation with other adult education institutes, like universities.

Evaluations should always be part of all the programs. This way museum staff can see if their hard work pays off and they can learn something themselves and improve their practice.

Lifelong and lifewide learning are an integral part of the work of AOAMs. It is worth improving the practice, because all parties will benefit: the (adult) visitors and the museums themselves.

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