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Getting the Picture – the Interactive Museum

What's this all about?

Museums face challenges.

Policy suggests that funding be linked to access and public use of collections. Increasing visitor footprint may require new approaches to collections and to marketing a museum attraction.

Vital footprint comes from schools.

Schools are attracted by curriculum-focused museum displays, museum activities, classrooms activities, homework etc. and direct feedback leading to deeper relationships.

The question then arises: how does a museum become more interactive with its users and more curriculum-focused, and how will schools become more attracted to museums and desire to work with them?

A recent survey of 15-17 year-olds in the US, gathered the following suggestions on using pictures:

“I would use pictures that could explain the whole story, and make them colorful, modern pictures.”

“I would put in real-life pictures of people that looked all different and represented different cultures and styles.”

“Kids that are doing real kid stuff.”

“Large, bright photos with descriptions.”

“Ones that catch readers’ attention and pertain to the material, but are interesting.”

“I would put in pictures of the landscapes that the stories take place in.”

“Pictures of what was going on during certain scenes in the story.”

“Descriptive charts.”

“I would put pictures of the actual graphing calculator being used so I can understand the concept better.”

“Explanatory diagrams because they help me put the complex definitions into mental images.”

“I would use realistic pictures of how an apparently boring concept is used in real life.”

“Relevant, interesting pictures that have to do with the subject.”

“Pictures should make the learning more fun.”

Museum assets are doors to worlds that are to be explored by visitors. But even the largest museums are unable to tell the full story behind these doors without explanation. Additional assets and, increasingly, photos, video, illustration, animation, interactive AVs etc. make this possible.

So how does a museum acquire all the additional assets it needs to open the door, tell their story more completely and provide schools (and other visitors) with the understanding they need?

Curators may know what would complete the picture surrounding their exhibits, but they may not know where to get them, how to manage the technical requirements, deal with copyright and negotiate licensing.

Why should I care?

Well, two main reasons:

1. funding, visitor numbers, school outreach and exhibition modernisation make a compelling case for providing wider contextual explanations that bring exhibits alive.
2. the costs and difficulties involved in acquiring the necessary assets can escalate. Without expert knowledge and management, delays to the project are likely; copyright is unlikely to be correctly addressed (even a museum’s own collection of photos may not be usable, for example); and licensing costs are certain to be higher.

Conclusion

Photos, video, illustration, animation, interactive AVs etc. all enable museums to tell their stories more attractively and more completely, increasing visitor numbers, connecting with schools and improving grant aid.

Researching, managing and licensing such (internal and external) assets should be carried out by experts capable of making significant and long term savings and contributing valuable content and additional knowledge to the project.

Other Zooid papers:

Copyright and IP + Due Diligence, Orphan works and Cheap Stock

- Zooid white paper 090323

Taking Care of Orphans

- Zooid white paper 090717

Demonstrating Due Diligence

- Zooid white paper 090731

Legacy & Integrity

- Zooid white paper 090801

Outsourcing, Offshoring & Outlaws

- Zooid white paper 090810

Getting the Picture – the Interactive Museum

- Zooid white paper 090827

Please call me on +44 20 7267 9990 if you would like to discuss any of the above

Richard Philpott

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