



Engage Families

Looking at family programs in a new light



USS Constitution
Museum

Funded, in part, by

A project of the USS Constitution Museum

© 2015 USS Constitution Museum





Engage Families!

Identify the strategies, characteristics, and techniques of design and facilitation that encourage *active, intergenerational engagement, enjoyment, and learning.*

How to move from:

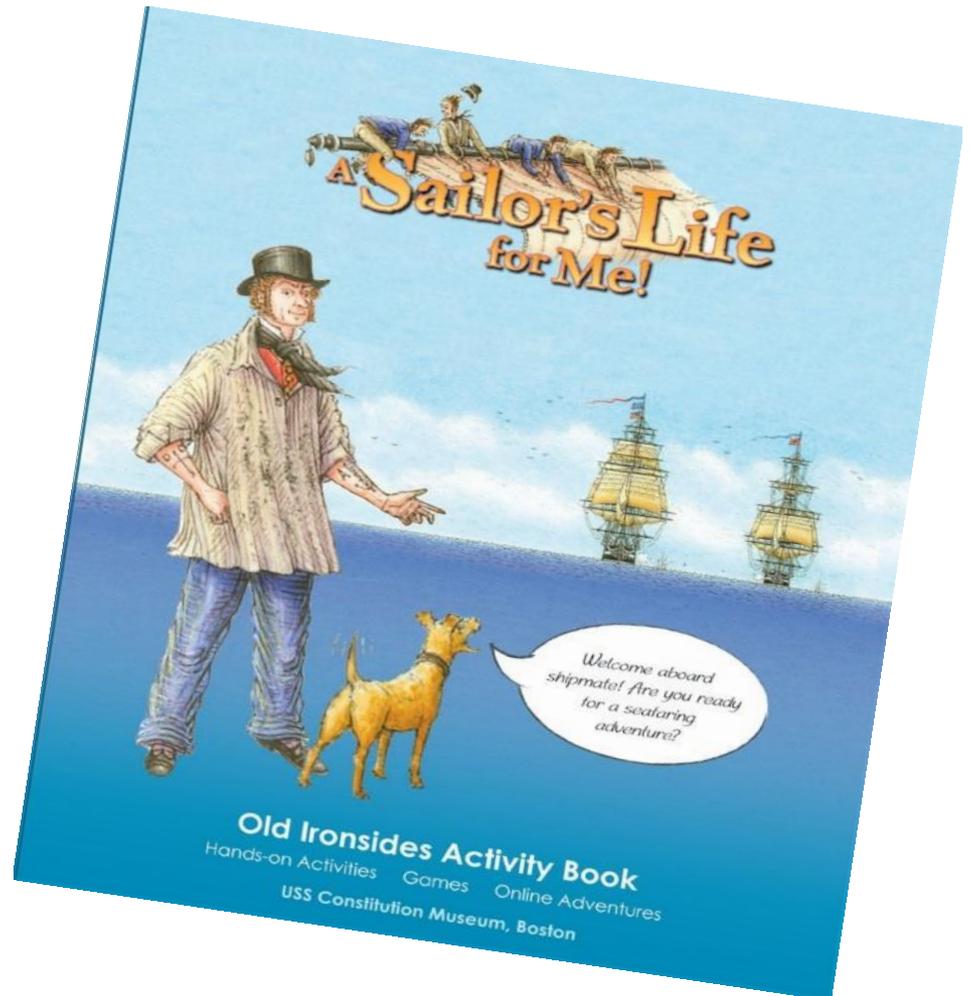
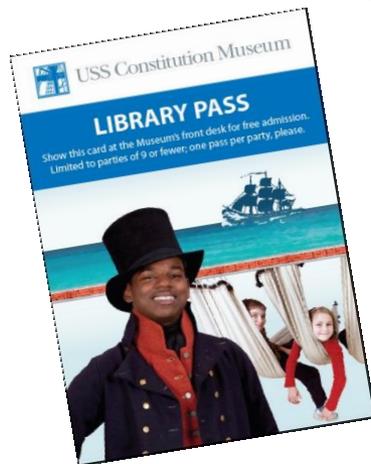
Parent Involvement
(helping, watching)



Parent Engagement
(interaction, learning, doing)

With findings disseminated through workshops, articles, and online at engagefamilies.org.

Based on prior collaborations with libraries and library orgs.



Same audience, similar needs, similar programs

Benefits of Engaging Families

Families:

- Build connections
- Make memories
- Support life-long learning

Museums & Libraries:

- Expand audiences
- Encourage repeat visitation
- Strengthen communities



Conscious / Focused Design

What it all boils down to...

- Deliberate planning to find methods of incorporating adults and sparking their interest.
- Developing a variety of access points to the program to accommodate patrons' varied needs and expectations, as well as abilities and knowledge.
- Keep adults front and center in your mind!

Program Topic



- Focus on a topic relevant to your audience.
- Make your program distinctive with a twist.
- Include intellectual and emotional connections for kids AND adults.
- Choose something fun and interesting for all ages.



How can you take a generic topic and make it applicable to your community, patrons' cultures, library resources, or something else unique to your institution, users, and/or community?

Design Strategies



Include adults in every aspect of the program, even nametags and introductions. Let them touch things. Ask everyone to answer your questions. Consistently use words and phrases like, “teamwork,” “group activity,” and “all ages.”

- Set the expectation that this is a family program from the get-go (or even before).
- Encourage conversations between family members.
- Find ways to provide access and flexibility for a diverse and ever-changing audience.
- Layer content so that there’s something for everyone.
- Add context to your space as possible to promote understanding, connections, and further exploration.
- Comfortable (intellectually, emotionally, physically)
- Provide opportunities for patrons to continue the experience in the library or at home.
- FUN!!!!

Facilitation



Find ways to consciously and continually engage adults from the invitation to the welcome and throughout the program (pay attention to transitions!).

- **Establish Engagement**
 - It is essential to engage adults in the first 30 seconds. Consider all the ways you can let them know your program is for them, too.
- **Maintain Engagement**
 - Respect the family dynamic and give them choice and agency, whenever possible.
- **Maximize Engagement**
 - Model learning behaviors with adult caregivers and scaffold them by helping them interact positively with their children.
 - Cultivate a flexibility that allows you to be nimble and make on-the-fly decisions to alter the program to suit the needs of your audience.



DESIGNING EXHIBITIONS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES' CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Family learning theory assumes that learning occurs during people's interactions, ...

[Continue Reading ...](#)



Engage Families Project, 2013-2016

Thanks to the Family Learning Project (2004-2011), we at the USS Constitution Museum have experienced the



Museums as Social Learning Spaces

Museums as Social Learning Spaces (article and video presentation), by Lynn Dierking,



Transforming an Existing Program into a Truly Intergenerational Activity: A Case Study

Big Ideas/Takeaways: You can

engagefamilies.org

An exhibit & program resource for library & museum professionals.

Lauren McCormack, lmccormack@ussconstitutionmuseum.org

Text to 22333

“I can see how the USSCM Engage Families project will be useful to my work.”

Strongly Agree	390367
Agree	390368
Neither Agree nor Disagree	390369
Disagree	390370
Strongly Disagree	390371