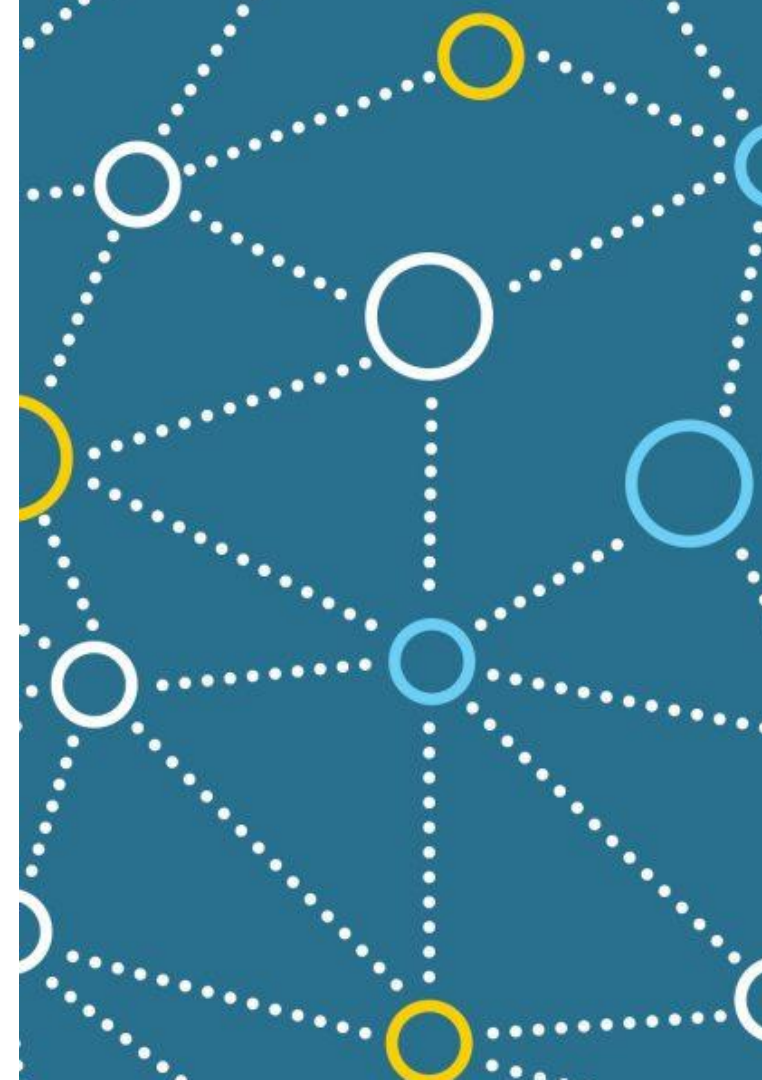


Introduction

What is the Children's Museum Research Network?

Network structure inspired by existing networks

- Making and Tinkering COP
- NISE Net
- Denver Evaluation Network
- BISE
- COVES



Learning Value of Children's Museums: Research Agenda Symposium

September 10–11, 2013



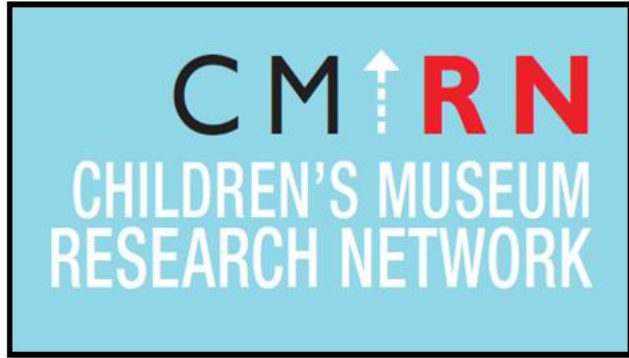
As a result of the symposium and subsequent conversations with CMs across the country, a field wide research agenda was established. The agenda “identifies and prioritizes the evidence most needed by the field to articulate and demonstrate the distinct learning impacts of children’s museums”.

Broad categories include:

- Characteristics of Children’s Museums
- Audience
- Learning Landscape

Made possible with a grant from





- Boston Children's Museum
- Children's Museum of Houston
- Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
- Children's Museum of Tacoma
- DuPage Children's Museum
- Minnesota Children's Museum
- Providence Children's Museum
- Thanksgiving Point Institute
- The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
- The Magic House, St. Louis Children's Museum

Made possible with a grant from



Participant Input (5-10 minute conversation)

What benefits have you experienced (or do you foresee) in participating in cross-institutional collaborative research or evaluation?

What challenges have you experienced (or do you foresee) with collaborative research or evaluation?



How does the CMRN operate?

- Leadership and structure
- Face to face working meetings:
 - Meetings at ACM Interactivity
 - Meetings at the University of Washington
- Monthly phone meetings
- Information sharing and discussion through Groupsite
- Phone and Skype meetings as needed for individual/ small group meetings
- Co-writing through Google docs
- Individual meetings between partner museums



Children's Museum Research Network - Methods and Approach

CMRN grounded in the research agenda

Research design focused on exploratory questions using qualitative methods:

- SIG1 – Learning Frameworks

- SIG2 – How children's museums position “play” in mission and practice



SIG 1: CM's Beliefs about Learning

Focused on the Research Agenda question “*What are children’s museums beliefs about learning?*”

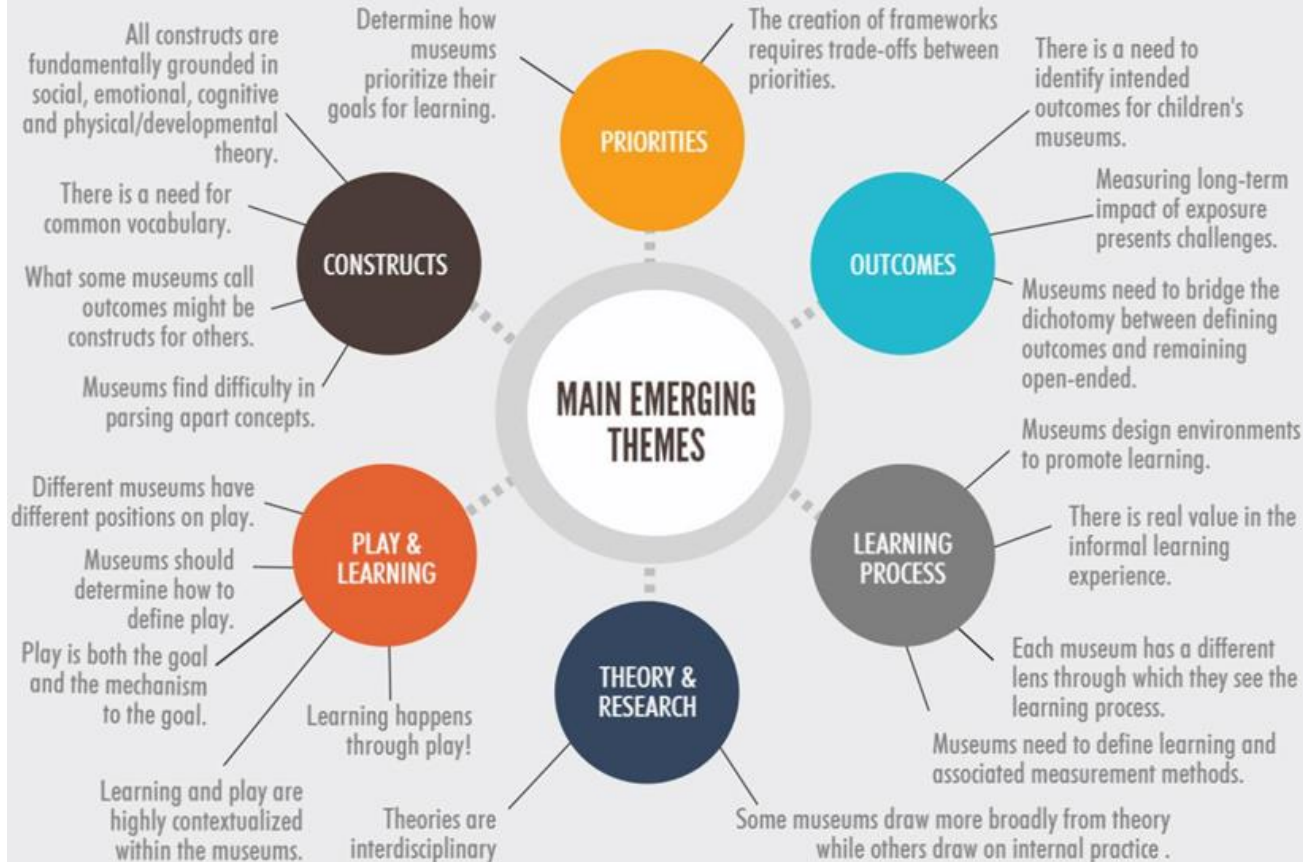
Looked specifically at institutional learning frameworks

Three research questions:

- 1.What major vocabularies do these frameworks share? Where do they diverge?
- 2.What constructs do children’s museums use and prioritize in their learning frameworks?
- 3.What learning theories do these frameworks implicitly and explicitly reflect or endorse?

Five
museums
from the
Network
provided
learning
frameworks
and
participated
in group
interviews.

THEMES FROM SIG-1 LEARNING FRAMEWORKS



<http://childrensmuseums.org/childrens-museum-research-network>

SIG 1 Dissemination



Views

ANALYZING LEARNING FRAMEWORKS IN CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS



Posted by Jen Rehkamp
September 01, 2016
Project Spotlights

This Spotlight was collaboratively written by Susan Foutz, Jenni Martin, Jennifer Rehkamp, and Melissa Swank

With the leadership of the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) and the University of Washington's Museumology Graduate Program (UW), staff from ten children's museums are working to design and implement research to benefit the field of children's museums. Building a Practicing Research Network in the Children's Museum Field, a project funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), aims to foster the field's capacity for research and create a self-sustaining research network.

CURATOR THE MUSEUM JOURNAL

Play and Children's Museums:

A Path Forward or a Point of Tension?

SIG 2: CM's Conceptualizations of Play and Learning

- Builds on results from first study
- Focuses more specifically on play and learning within a larger sample of children's museums
- Members of the research team completed 50 interviews with a representative sample of ACM professionals from across the country
- Aims to describe how children's museums conceptualize play, and how they position themselves and their work relative to play

Network members participated in completing interviews, assisting with data analysis, and dissemination.

Interview Question Topics

- Role of play in mission statement
- Importance of play for mission
- Definition of play
- Types of play
- Indicators of play
- Relationship between play and learning
- Measuring play
- Benefits of play



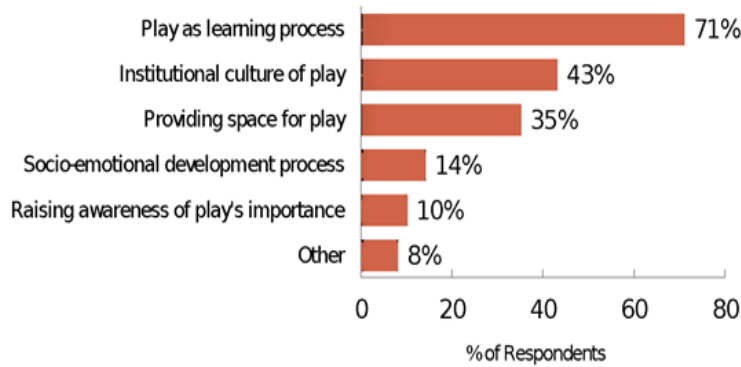


Figure 1. Role of play in mission

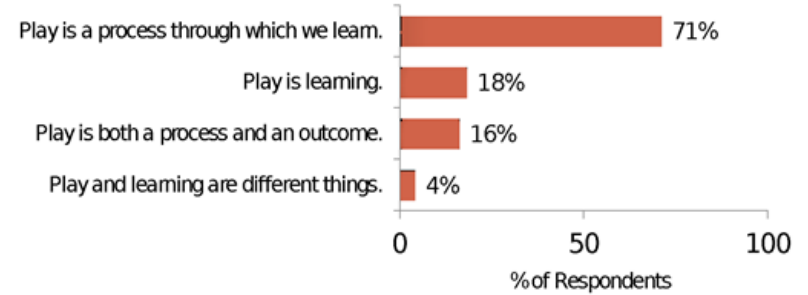


Figure 3. Relationship between play and learning

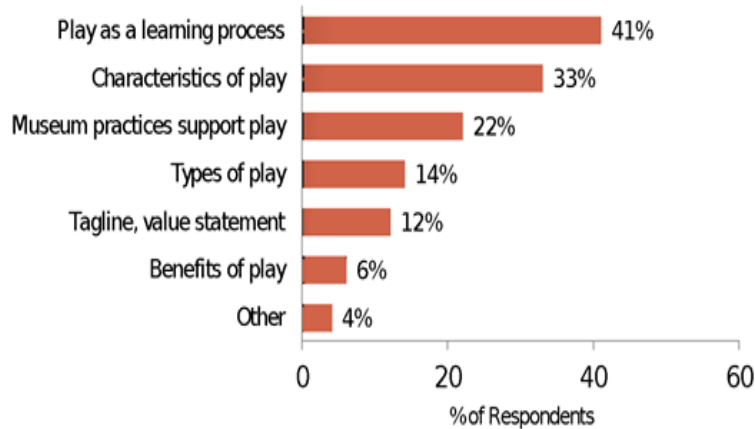


Figure 2. Nature of definition of play, whether written or not

“This study speaks to the need for museums to discuss the aspects of play that they support or emphasize, and articulate how they believe those experiences contribute to different forms of learning. Such conversations would help children’s museums to argue for their unique learning value and advocate more effectively for the value of play for the individuals and communities they serve.”

Submitted to Hand to Hand

Table Discussion (10-15 minute conversation)

What are the benefits of the current CMRN methods and process?

What are the challenges the CMRN group might face, now and into the future?

What other questions do you still have about the CMRN, it's methods, or processes?



Collaborative Meaning Making

Benefits

Challenges

Questions

What did each group come up with?

What similarities and differences are there
between groups?

Altogether, what are the stories we see in
this set of “data”?



What do Network members say about the experience?

- *This is an active research group that requires dedicated engagement which will create tremendous opportunities to stimulate research and evaluation initiatives at the local level. (DCM)*
- *Involvement requires some time commitment, but for us it has not been burdensome. We have enjoyed the comradery of working with the other people in the network. (Thanksgiving Point)*
- *Involvement is what you make of it—you can be extremely involved if you have the capacity, and can be a critical companion, along for the ride, if needed for a bit. (CMP)*
- *Museums interested in getting involved in the network to advance the field of museum research and evaluation should be prepared to make a true commitment of time and resources to the project and understand that the greatest benefit will be derived from active participation on calls, at in-person meetings, and through involvement in data dissemination. (TMH)*
- *You don't have to be an expert in research and evaluation to contribute to the network – just have an interest and passion for it. (CMT)*

Children's Museum Research Network: Evaluation

Oberg Research external evaluator for the IMLS grant

- Benefits
 - Capacity Building
 - Influence on Internal Practices
 - Relationships
- Challenges
 - Clarity of roles and goals



Final Q&A!

And thank you!

