

Event: *From Education to Engagement*

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[39:35] Well, it's great to be here with you in Tennessee, and when David [Thelen] invited me to participate in his class and in this public program, he asked me as well to sort of think about and tell how I became involved in issues of public engagement in museums, and that was a harder question than I thought it was going to be. And as I thought about it, I realized that I didn't have a kind of quick, ready answer to say "Oh yes, and it was that day, and then, you know, that's how I got involved in it." It was much more complicated, and a longer journey, than I imagined that it had been. So, I'm going to take the time that I have with you this evening to just kind of walk through that journey, and it's partly for my own benefit, because it was interesting to see how some of the ideas that we've been talking about originated, when they originated, and sort of how this all this happened. And just to kind of look about how I turned from someone who started out as one of those curators, interested in this stuff of history, to someone who instead was becoming a student of how people interact with history.

[41:00] So I started my career as a decorative arts curator in a historic house museum. You can't get more typical than that. And one day, this was in Utica, New York, and this was at Fountain Elms, which is a Victorian House Museum, and I was very immersed in collections, and research, and cataloging, and doing some exhibitions and writing catalogues, and my aha! moment came when I was sitting in my work room, putting teeny-tiny numbers on teeny-tiny doll furniture for the dollhouse of the family that lived there. And suddenly I thought "What am I doing? Who cares?" I took so much pride in the fact the numbers were legible. Who cares about that? And suddenly, it really occurred to me that my job might be to put those numbers on, but that wasn't enough. And that, unless someone cared about that, there was really no reason to have these collections perfectly catalogued, and described, and housed in the right boxes. And so, that really became, for me, a point early in my career, thank-goodness, that there needed to be some other purpose to this work than just cataloging objects, not that it isn't important, it still is important.

[42:35] About the time I was asking myself these questions, science centers were moving in a new direction, away from systematic collections. So in the fall of 1969, Robert Oppenheimer opened the Exploratorium in California, and Taizo Miake opened the Ontario Science Centre, in Ontario. What's amazing to me is that these were two projects, both very innovative, neither of them were aware of the other, and yet they came up with startlingly similar conclusions. The Exploratorium defined science as not as a set of facts to learn, but as a process that visitors

participated in and actively explored, and the Ontario Science Centre was based on the Chinese saying that “I hear and I forget, I see and I believe, I do and I understand.” Both of them designed exhibits that required and encouraged visitors to interact on many levels. So there was floor staff, explainers, object theaters that sort of involved theatrics and objects, experiments in the gallery. All of this brought new, fresh ideas to the museum world. These were revolutionary ideas, for science museums as well, because if history museums were stuck in collections, natural history museums were really grounded in systematic collections. In retrospect it’s easy to say, “Oh, well, that’s science. That’s interesting to people.” But that wasn’t the case. And it was almost more revolutionary for I think science museums to move in that direction than history, but move they did. In the 1970s and 1980s, I was working in a history museum in Lexington, Massachusetts sponsored by Scottish Rite Masons that was called the Museum of our National Heritage, which was doing, changing, exhibitions with borrowed collections. It was kind of a history gallery, which was itself kind of an odd idea, and innovative in its own way. We didn’t have deep collections, and we had to borrow and partner with people. We began experimenting with interactive elements partly in response to these new science museums models. It looked like they were getting lots of visitors and maybe there was something we could learn from that. The first of these experiments was an interactive gallery that accompanied a very, very traditional British Library exhibit on the famous voyage of Sir Francis Drake, for the four-hundredth anniversary of his 1578 voyage. We looked at this and thought, “Well, these are just wonderful, rare objects, but it was very traditional.” And we thought, “You know, people in Lexington, Massachusetts, aren’t really steeped in British history; how are we going to make this understandable?” So we came up with the idea of doing a second, interactive exhibit, along with this. So the first thing we did was to go talk and to our friends at the Boston Science Museum. [We said] “How do you do this stuff? What’s important?” One of the things that they told us was, “If you want people to move, you need to have something interesting that they can look at. You have to use their eyes to actually get them to move around.” So the resulting hands-on experiences included try-on costumes, break-away costumes I found out they’re called, you know, the Elizabethan things, very interesting, with mirrors; a game of chance, “Pirate or Patriot”—so you had to spin, like, a roulette wheel and to see what he did, and to decide whether he was a pirate or patriot, or a little bit of both; a recreated ship deck; what Drake thought he would find, which was on the top, and then there were little, sort of, more peepholes that you looked in [showing] what he actually found, so you had to discover things. And then, my favorite, which was a peephole that you looked through and then you saw yourself on an engraving, a painting, of either Queen Elizabeth or Sir Francis Drake.

[46:59] It was interesting that we decided to do a separate gallery; we obviously couldn’t mess up this traveling exhibition from the British Library, which was very elegant, but it was very cerebral, all by itself. I mean, frankly, we did not know what we were doing, but the experiment was a success. People of all ages loved the interaction, and they spent more time and attention with the traditional exhibit than they would have otherwise. It’s interesting, because I think we did the try-on costumes always thinking, “Oh well, children will love this.” And my favorite

memory of that exhibit was seeing a middle-aged man and his elderly father trying on the doublet, you know, because it gives you a completely different shape, and putting a cape on and saying, “What Ho! Sir Francis” in the mirror, in the middle of a gallery, I mean, it was wonderful!

[48:01] In fact, the years I spent in Lexington doing those exhibits was really a tremendous education, because temporary exhibitions turn out to be a wonderful medium for experimentation and for risk-taking. A lot of times history museums are really hampered by the fact that we do the permanent exhibit. And the, or the exhibits are so expensive that it, you know, you only get to do it once in a lifetime, or, you know, twice in a lifetime, that changing exhibits are harder to do. But to actually, specifically say “OK, let’s do something quick and dirty. What can we learn from that?” It’s such a different experience to try something when it’s only going to be up for six months. How bad can it, how much trouble can you get in to? If it’s not good, you go on to the next thing. And that’s exactly what we did, is to just to be able to try something, and then if that works, use it right away in the next exhibit; if it didn’t work, find out what didn’t work and be able to move on from there. It also allowed us, what we did after that, and then, and I want to mention what, pick up on what Ellen [Rosenthal] said, is the first experiment we did was to just to have a separate exhibit, a children’s exhibit separately. But after that we began to put interactive elements into the mainstream of the exhibit. And part of that is so that families, so that there is something for kids to do and adults, and that they can go through together. And later, when I was working in Minnesota, we were going through similar discussions thinking “Oh, should we have a children’s area?” And there was something that, the head of Disney had had an editorial, and he said, “Families like to do things together.” And I said, “Aha! Why would you have a separate room where the children are playing and the parents are bored? Why not work it into the whole?” So we really had some fun doing that.

[50:09] It also, having these changing exhibitions, really allowed me to do what I loved to do, which is to observe visitor behavior. I think that the anthropologist in me really; I think there is nothing more interesting than just wandering around the floor of a museum. I mean even now when I go to museums as a visitor I’m still fascinated by watching other people use the exhibits as well. So I began to notice that when, some exhibits, some things always worked, and I began asking myself why? And I began to think about the fact that if we were designing exhibits for basic primate behavior, they were always successful, regardless of age or content. So bear with me here. Primates are curious. So if you hide something, a hundred percent of your visitors will look at it; if you cover something, they will pick it up because they have to; they can’t help themselves. So flipbooks, lift-up kinds of things, are just this. You see them at science museums, they work in history museums, they work everywhere. It’s just a behavior, we can’t help ourselves. Uh, try-on costumes, primates like to look at themselves, we are self-aware. We, the peepholes that I mentioned, I mean that’s something you can see on construction sites in the city where people have to stop and look. Well, the same thing in exhibits. Um, games. One of the things we learned very early on with the “Pirate and Patriot,” is lots of times we have

interactives, but they're just boring and people, primates, humans, we like to play games—we're playful, but we like there to be some payback. There needs to be something—that you learn a skill, that you learn something, there's got to be something you get out of that interaction, that game. And the last thing is that primates primarily learn through social interactions. And I have to say that I was able to test these hypotheses some years later at an AAM [American Association of Museums] meeting where we actually did a session on primates in the gallery, and the other people on the session were two primatologists, who actually agreed and talked about, it was really interesting, to hear them talk about primate learning, which is primarily visual, good for museums, almost always social, and that naturalistic learning is about this free-will learning. One of the, one of them had a chart that showed formal education and naturalist learning, sort of what is in sort of traditional societies, and that sort of thing. And it turns out that museum learning is much closer to that traditional society learning, where you are learning with, in a social situation from someone, with, who you trust, your, in a family situation, rather than formal learning. So, I think there is something, some really interesting things to think about there. I have to say, when I look at a family in a gallery, what I see is a hunting-gathering group, actually a gathering group. Has anybody ever picked berries? What happens? The youngest children range out, and go find, and then they come back and say, "Oh look, here's this, here's this, here's that," and it's exactly the way families go through galleries. So, really thinking about what people want to do, and what feels comfortable for them, and it sounds, I mean it's kind of weird, in a way, to think about it in that way, but there are things that people like to do and that feel comfortable to them, and when they feel comfortable, they're much more apt to be learning.

[54:17] Well about the same time that I was observing people in galleries, other people were doing this in a much more serious way. John Falk and Lynn Dierking were pioneering serious work in visitor studies, and the *Museum Experience*, published in 1992, provided objective analysis of their observations and surveys of museum visitors, and I know for many of us it changed the way we thought about the museum experience. What was going on with visitors was much more complex than most of us had imagined. Visitors brought a lot of their own experience with them, they took away unexpected outcomes, they were interested in the social interactions and the physical environments. And I think one of the things that came out of that study, which again, was that museum visitors do not come for learning as their primary goal. Their primary goal is a social experience—to be with family, to be with friends, even to interact, but it is very much a social experience for them.

[55:23] We've been chatting about the 1990s, and one of the reasons for that is that as I began thinking about how I kind of got serious about the idea of the visitor experience and what we could do in exhibits to really enhance that experience, I realized that the 1990s, everything sort of kept coming back to the 1990s, and I was talking to Bob Beatty [Vice President of American Association of State and Local History], and he was saying there was a lot of stuff going on with AAM and other studies, the visitor studies—a whole range of things. And at that point I had moved and was working at the Minnesota Historical Society, opening the new history center

there. And it was a very interesting time to be starting a new state history program, because there was all this new theory that was swirling around, which we wanted to take advantage of, and we wanted to figure out how we put this into practice. Visitor research was a major, major component in that period of time. As David [Thelen] said, we really took it seriously in putting together the exhibits there. The project, one of the things that we did, is to work on doing visitor research to find out what people were interested in. So for example, one question we had was, did we have to explain to visitors that there wasn't just one narrative, one official narrative of history. This was a question people were talking about at that time, you know, the official narrative versus multiple perspectives and multiple narratives. And we thought, "Well, you know, we are going to really have to spend some time making sure that visitors understand that." Well, when we actually did the visitor research we found out that people knew that already. And it was really a lesson to know what is it that you need to think about, and what is it that people need to know, what do they know already? And why would we waste a lot of time and energy telling them something that was really already apparent to them? They were there already. One of the things that we did which really was helpful in terms of getting staff to come along with thinking about new ways of treating our exhibits and our programming, was that we, we did have a consultant, but then it's very expensive to hire people to go out and do surveys and interview people, so we actually enlisted our staff. So everyone on the staff had to go out and do a certain number of surveys. And these were out at shopping centers, not in the museum; we wanted to find out what people who didn't come to the museum thought, and what they were interested in. And my favorite story of that, is that one of our designers was very, very shy, very introverted. But, he had to do his interviews. He was out on the street and, as you know, when you're doing visitor surveys it's like, "OK, the third person that walks over this line is the one" you're going to interview so that it's completely random; you don't get to pick who you talk to. And so he watched two people go by and the third person that went by was a group of bikers, with tattoos and leather. So he walked up to them, he was a very slight person, and said, "Would you have a high interest in visiting a new Minnesota history center?" Well, it turned out, they did have a very high interest, and it was really, he came back and told this story to the rest of the staff and it was really an [eye]-opener, to say, "You can't judge or think about who is interested, you can't decide that this person is interested and that person not interested." There were always surprises, that visitors were not going to be able to be put into little boxes, and it really opened up that, the people that we saw visiting, we had to have a lot more respect for them and their interests and what they might bring.

[59:33] Another piece that was going on at that time, was a sort of, new ideas, was ideas about civic engagement, community engagement. John Chen, Jack Chen's article, "Creating a Dialogic Museum," was published in 1992, and talked about his ideas of engaging community members in using personal memory and testimony to inform historical scholarship in the New York Chinatown History Project in New York. Similarly, Ron Chu described his experiences, as director of the Wing Luke Museum, which was changing the role of the museum in relationship to its community. And he described that as from an inward looking citadel into an active town

hall. And this really excited a lot of people in terms of how communities could become more engaged and involved, especially in museums that were talking about community history, instead of thinking of it as a commodity that you would save, and create, and then give back to the community, that it would be something that would be actually created with the community.

[1:00:44] Throughout the 1990s, the American Association of Museums made museums and communities a central initiative, and several mainstream history museums, the Chicago Historical Society, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, as well as the Pittsburgh Heinz History Center, all experimented with community-based history exhibits that struggled with issues of insiders and outsiders, how do you as a curator go into a community and work with that community, who's in charge? Who gets to set the agenda? Who gets to have the say of the final product? Who shapes the story? And these multiple voices, and contested identities really were something that mainstream history museums were looking at other either ethnic, or racially specific museums, who were having much more success with this, but we thought, "Well, we should try this too." But each of these projects really concluded that working in this dialogic way with communities required endless meetings, facilitation skills, diplomacy, and unlimited time. A new set of skills, and a new way of working for historians, and museum staff. And it's interesting, because few of these individual experiments and these exhibition projects were repeated or permanently changed the museum's approaches to public history. It's interesting that in that period of time, history museums sort of experimented with that, and then backed off from it. Now that is not to say community museums don't exist, and the ones that are sort of from the community have continued to be successful and certainly to be continued to be created.

[1:02:47] Oral history is another strain that certainly has influenced a lot of museums and museums exhibits. When I was in Washington we did an exhibit that was based just on oral history; it didn't start with collections at all. We basically looked at a hundred years of Washington D.C., the city's history, and took decades, and interviewed people from, who were growing up in those decades. And what we did was, because it's D.C., is we paired, because of the diverse men and women, white and black. And what was really interesting, and then they shared family photographs, and sometimes artifacts, and it was a small exhibit, but it was really based just on the oral histories. And the programming that went along with that was very interesting as well because we had, then, community dialogues about the, some of the participants and then others. But what it really, I mean the, incredibly process of, and the programming for this that resulted, was of having people who had grown up in Washington, D.C., in a segregated city, compare childhoods that were perfect mirror images and yet never intersected. And so one of my favorite parts of that was that when we did these interviews, white and black Washingtonians from the, you know, 30s, 40s, all talked about how important their neighborhood movie theater was, because it was air-conditioned for one thing. But those movie theaters were segregated, and they were completely separate experiences, and yet the same experience when they came together again, and in these public programs we had people sharing

those stories and realizing, “We had the same childhood, we just had the same childhood separately,” which was very moving, and changing for people, to really understand that they had so much in common and yet had never really been together during their childhood. So it was an interesting way to talk about segregation, but not because we were talking about segregation, but just through the stories of real people.

[1:05:26] The whole issue of memory, and we talked a little bit about that, and certainly some of the work done that was done by David [Thelen] with the *Journal of American History* has really sparked a whole new area of historical research on the study of memory and history. And we were talking at lunch today that in some ways that has become one of the points of intersection for academic and public historians, which I think did not exist before; it’s become a common ground. And it’s also a place where you can’t talk about memory and not talk about and with the audience, because those memories are what people are doing and forming, your audience, you visitors are part of that story as well.

[1:06:25] One of the things that we learned from audience research at the Minnesota Historical Society was that people who had an emotional experience, had a better overall experience in the museum. So one of the things we started out, to do, was to have a theater, actually an object theater, and I have to say that this came full circle because the exhibit designer that helped open the Minnesota History Center, had actually trained and studied with Taizo Miake, and so he brought some of those science museum ideas into the History Center. So we started out, and honestly, when we were talking about the theater, which was called Home Place Minnesota, our goal was to make people cry. Now you don’t often hear that in history museums, but we thought, “Well, we wanted people to have an emotional experience.” And Garrison Keeler was the narrator, it was about finding a place, it was about immigration. It was about all these things. And people did cry, it moved people in an emotional way. And later there was an audio-visual object theater which was in an exhibit on families that was about death. And honestly, there was a table with Kleenexes because people routinely cried. And it was not about, necessarily, the story they were hearing, but again, about themselves, their own experiences, and making those kinds of connections. So why was that important? When we did the visitor research, we found that people who had gone to the theater, and experienced the theater, got more out, had better retention of information, had a better experience across the board. And we also realized in our research that if people could make a connection with someone from the past; an emotional experience, it also opened them up to taking in more complex ideas and analysis than if they did not. So really thinking about emotion and empathy as a very, very strong part of the museum exhibit has some very interesting ramifications.

[1:08:53] The other thing that we also had—when you’re starting a new museum it’s just like, it’s a complete open, you’ve got a blank slate, so you can really think about things in ways that—it’s hard to retrain or redo exhibits. So one of the things we also came up with was the idea of then, from this research, that we wanted people to make a connection between their experiences and the experiences of people in the past; we weren’t really interested in them learning

everything there was to know about Minnesota history, but if we could just get them to make a connection, that's really what our objective was. The second thing we told ourselves, you know we had a conference room, we had papers up on the wall, we were going to do, you know, the wonderful planning phases of an exhibit. The other thing we put on there, boldly, was, "The visitor is in charge of their own experience," which turned out very easy to say and very difficult to do. So, let me give you an example of what happened. The first year we opened and we had school groups, and so we gave the information to the leader of each of the little groups, of when school groups broke up, and it was a disaster; it did not work at all. So we came back and we regrouped and we said, "What happened? This is was terrible." And we said, "Oh yeah, the visitor is in charge of their own experience." And that works for school kids, as well as the individual. The next year, every kid got the information, and then, what we saw happening on the floor, was these groups would go out, the kids started, the students started helping each other: "Oh, I found this. Did you find that?" There was all this social interaction going on, which never happened when the group leader was saying, "And now we're going to go here, and now we're going to go here." So, we learned from that and we realized that we had to really stay on top of that, because our first impulse was to always say, "We want to control this environment, we want to control this experience." That really was an example of letting go, and letting people of all ages really have that chance to explore and own it.

[1:11:21] So sharing stories, community empowerment, personal engagement with history, engaging visitors in experience; these all have been giant steps forward in making museums more engaging places to learn. But I always have to ask myself, "Is that enough? Is that where we're going to end? Have we gone as far as we need to?" I think the experiments in Minnesota were successful with the public. We were able to do research. But looking forward, I really think that museums need to keep seeking opportunities for even deeper engagement. And it's interesting, I've followed marketing trends and studies, I always like to read things that aren't in our field, because I think they tell us a lot that we can then use. If you only read things that are going on in museums—it's interesting to see what's going [on] in parallel universes. And one of the things that I was reading was that the "experience economy" was a big buzzword a few years ago. And some people are beginning to talk about the fact that the next thing is the "transformation economy"—that people are actually interested in not just in experiences, but experiences that transform them. Some of the examples that were given were things like health clubs. It's not enough to just exercise, but you have to exercise to be healthier—something that has an effect on you, that changes you—your diet, changing your life, that this is a part of what people look for these days. So I think one of the reasons that the idea of dialogue in museums, these conversations that we have with people, are so important is that transformation is really part of that dialogic experience. "The Art of Democracy" was a project a few years ago that was done by the Americans for the Arts. And as part of the report on that project there was an essay on the art of dialogue that pointed out that the work of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, who was one of the originators of this whole idea of dialogue, saw the goal of dialogue as responsive understanding, and believed that dialogue always meant change. So while historians,

are probably, will rarely say that our work is to transform people, the idea of dialogue in museums, of getting people to have a conversation, to have those kinds of interactions, does leave people changed in many ways.

[1:14:16] I was recently listening to a “Radio Lab” segment on NPR—I’m now commuting forty miles so I really am up on a lot of things—and they were talking about how human beings establish a sense of personal identity. And the response of the brain scientist was, “by telling ourselves a story about ourselves.” So really, our whole identity is a story, and if you have one story and you can replace it with another story, you are transformed. Or, if you acquire a new story, you are transformed, in deeper ways, I think, than we often will admit. Stories allow us to feel empathy, compassion. I also, I think it’s interesting because, there was another article that I read about looking at, can you actually, can compassion actually, can you get better at it, can you learn it? He quoted the fact that the Dalai Lama contended that individual experiences of compassion radiate outward and increase harmony for all, assuming that acts of compassion have the power to change the world. And he actually thought, “Well that’s interesting,” and he wanted to try an experiment to see how that worked. And he found that this series of experiments tested whether the experience of compassion towards a single individual can shape our actions toward others. The study’s results suggested that if we make an association with someone, even something as simple as tapping in unison, we increase our capacity to feel empathy and compassion in that situation and beyond. So, I really think there are ramifications for the work that we do, and the ability to connect to a person in the past, connect with a person in a museum, to have these kind of social experiences, and that maybe it’s not such an impossible task.

[1:16:39] The work that I’m doing right now is at the Gettysburg Seminary Ridge Museum, which is a new museum that will be opening July 1, which is the 150th anniversary [of the Battle of Gettysburg]. The museum is located in the historic building that was there on the Seminary at the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. The exhibits really reflect the experiences and what happened in that building. So there is one floor that talks about the first day of the battle, there’s one floor that talks about the care of the wounded, because it was used as a field hospital, and because Adams County [Pennsylvania] was a border county, very involved with issues of slavery and the Underground Railroad, and it was a seminary, and still is on a seminary campus, to talk about the role of religion during the Civil War. And one of the things we’re finding in, by looking at the exhibits there is—the floor on the first day of the battle is a fairly traditional exhibit, it has maps, and timelines, and artifacts, and some murals depicting the battle scenes. The third floor uses life-cast figures to set up scenes from the hospital, but they’re in the actual rooms where that would have happened. The second floor, then, deals with issues of faith and freedom, sort of ideas and the war of words that preceded the Civil War. And what I have actually observed as people go through is that the floor on the battle is kind of what they are expecting, and it’s factual. [On] the third floor, I’ve seen actual physical changes in people that we brought through on preview exhibits, were the emotion of dealing with the numbers of wounded, the kinds of things that happened, the stories that nurses told of what they saw,

actually physically changes people; I've seen them change in front of my eyes. And by the time they reach the second floor, where we are talking about these ideas of religion and freedom, and intellectual, and questions of why, they are in a much different place than they would have, if they had started there. And so, again, thinking about this idea of a museum that can actually be transformative in terms of the experience is something that we are going to be looking at.

[1:19:36] One of the things that I wanted to share with you [is] two stories of preview visitors, which we talked a little about. One was, again, thinking about what people bring with you. So we had one preview, and it was a group of people who were Civil War buffs, and there was one contingent who were from Texas, and they were going through and looking at everything, and they came to the very end, which is a mural that looks at kind of the aftermath of the Civil War, of remembrance, reconciliation, and renewal, and ends with a photograph of Barak Obama's inauguration as the first black president. This fellow from Texas looked at it and said, "I'd love to get a copy of this." He said "This is great." And there was one photograph that showed a school desegregation scene, the march in Selma, and he said, "That really brings me back." And he proceeded to tell me a story of growing up in Texas, his father owned the grocery store, he was sitting on a porch tossing a football and three school buses drove up, and this was court-enforced desegregation, integration, and he said, "Every pick-up truck in town, including the Methodist minister was there, saying the most hateful, horrible things you could imagine, and for a long time nobody got off the bus." And he said, "Finally a fifth-grader got off the bus and walked across the street and came up to me and said, 'Do you want to play football?'" And he said that fellow is still his friend and they watched together as Barack Obama was inaugurated and cried. So the idea of what that mural meant to him was completely different than what someone else would—and the, it sort of, you know, it just tells you that this whole idea of recognizing that our visitors come with so much, that we need to really honor that and be able to allow them to contribute that, share that, or whatever. And for him, probably telling that story in that place with that mural in front of [it], was important to him. Which reminds me that when we were in Minnesota, and when I worked in Minnesota, and we were looking at people on the floor, again, retraining people not to think about telling the information, but really learning listen to our visitors and sometimes what visitors need most is a chance to tell you about their grandmother, and to tell you that because that's really a part of their learning experience as well.

[1:22:37] I want to just say, on the other side of it, we had a who visitor came through and at the end of it was kind of, seemed a little disoriented and our education director said "Are you OK?" And she said, "What gives you the right to make me think?" Which I, [she said], "I don't go to museums to think." And, on one hand that was troubling; we hadn't met her expectations obviously. On the other hand I was sorry I wasn't there because I would have said, "Yes, we have no right to make you think, but we do have that responsibility." And to really think about how do you judge success, and in a way, what she said was a great gift to us in terms of helping us understand what was going on with visitors, because one of the goals we've set for ourselves is not to convince people to believe this or that—we're talking about religion, we're talking

about both sides, arguments for and against slavery based on the Bible—but just to get people to think. And so for her to say, “what had given us the right to make her think” [made us think] maybe we were on the right track.

[1:24:01] I think there are caveats in terms of this. How far are people willing to go? I think we can't be prescriptive. It's interesting, there was a recent report by “Britain Thinks” that was done for the Museums Association in Britain, just came out in March 2013. And one of the things that it showed was that museums, that people in Britain, think that museums, see museums in much more traditional ways, as preservers, educators of children, and were not really interested in museums as civic forums, and debate, and that that was not attractive to them. So I think there is a fine line between engagement and advocacy, and that's something we have to be careful about as we go forward, people don't want advocacy for a specific position perhaps. And I'm just going to end by a quote from one of the people in this study who said, “Museums shouldn't be political, they should stimulate thinking and be informative only. Just tell us the facts, and let us make our own minds up.” So I think that, I started thinking about museums and exhibits as experiments, I still think they are very interesting explorations, and certainly as working with, opening a new museum in Gettysburg, I see it as another experiment with museums learning as least as much from the public as they learn from our exhibits and that that is a continuing learning laboratory that is what makes museums so interesting.

End.