Progressive Museum Education: Examples from the 1960s [1]

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Abstract
The combination of pedagogy and political aims, a constant theme in the progressive school education literature, is reflected as well in the history of museum education. Museum educators, following the lead of John Dewey, advocated for experiential pedagogy, a natural course for museums since they emphasize learning from objects and experiences rather than through lecture and text. But progressive museum educators also embraced the socio-political goals of progressive education. This was evident in the growing field of museum education during the progressive era, and, more recently in the history of the San Francisco Exploratorium and the Boston Children's Museum, institutions that had close ideological and personal connections with progressive educators in the 1960s and 1970s.

Keywords: John Dewey, museum education, progressive education, progressive society

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Introduction

The history of progressive education in the United States and worldwide is well known. Much has been written about its successes and failures, its pedagogy and the politics related to it (See Bruce & Pecore, 2013). But while progressive education in schools is well documented, progressive ideas have also influenced other educational domains. One for which there is little literature is the influence of progressive ideas on museum education. This is at least in part because there has been little attention to the history of museum education, even in the museological literature. In *The Museum: Its History and its Tasks in Education* (1949), still the best source of early museum education history, Alma Wittlin pointed out the long tradition of the use of museums as educational institutions and emphasized that the modern public museum, as distinct from the early cabinets of curiosity or royal *Schatzkammern*, was "an expression of the eighteenth-century spirit of enlightenment which generated enthusiasm for equality of opportunity in learning," although she also noted that "In practice, the traditions of the former private collections were carried on in the public museums, notwithstanding the contrariety of purpose and of circumstances" (Wittlin 1949, p. 133).

In the newly formed United States, where there was no tradition of elegant private collections opening to the public, early museums were recognized as educational institutions dedicated to the furtherance of the new democratic republic.[2] Charles Willson Peale, Jefferson's contemporary and friend, created his museum in the late 18th century with the intention of providing an educational resource for the public. David Ward (2004, p. xx), in his excellent biography of Peale, calls him "America's educator."

The intellectual and political leaders of the new United States were clear that education was a crucial component in supporting the new society they planned. Since there were few public schools at the time and no compulsory school attendance, museums had an obvious function in providing resources for educating both children and adults. As Peale (1795) said, echoing Jefferson, Madison and others, "In a country whose institutions all depend upon the virtue of the people, which in its turn is secure only as they are well informed, the promotion of knowledge is the first of duties."

This connection of the role of education with the promotion of democratic practice is at the heart of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916), and should be an essential component of any discussion of progressive education. The term "progressive" was an adjective Dewey used frequently to describe society: progressive societies, as opposed to static ones, recognize that education can promote progress towards a more just and more democratic society (Dewey, 1916, chapter 6, pp. 69-80). His earlier writings on education, such as *The School and Society* (1900), emphasize the pedagogic components of his educational ideas—the integration of school with life, learning through doing, an emphasis on experiences and the use of intellectual tools to integrate the experiences into understanding.

Education, so central to Dewey's conception of philosophy was for him not only a pedagogic task, but also a moral one: the goal of education was to provide the means for students and teachers to learn how to live in a democratic society. The first sentence of the preface to *Democracy and Education* makes this clear: "The following pages embody an endeavor to detect and state the ideas implied in a democratic society and to apply these ideas to the problems of the enterprise of education" (Dewey, 1916, p. iii).

The integral combination of experiential learning and a social-justice political goal is evident in almost every educational movement labeled as "progressive." For example, Paulo Freire's literacy program that uses pictures and discussion has a goal of empowering workers, Maria Montessori's reform efforts and hands-on materials were intended to particularly serve

neglected children; and Loris Malaguzzi and the Reggio Emilia villagers wanted a better education for their working class children than offered by the pre-war elitist Italian schools.

Museums by their very nature fulfill the requirements for a progressive pedagogy: they do not rely on books or lectures to achieve their educational goals, but emphasize experience with objects.[3] Although much museum experience involves primarily observation (especially in art museums), modern museums increasingly include active learning through interactive exhibitions.

Progressive museums, like progressive schools, follow Dewey's lead and combine experiential learning with a commitment to the socio-political goal of promoting democratic practices.

Dewey's interest in Museums

Museums were an important component of Dewey's formulation of education. The charts for an ideal school building in *The School and Society* (Chapter 3, pp. 63-94), as well as the text, illustrate that museums along with libraries are central to Dewey's thinking about curriculum. He writes, discussing art explicitly but clearly indicating that the same applies to other subjects:

> [The school] is a living union of thought and the instrument of expression. This union is symbolized by saying that in the ideal school the art work might be considered to be that of the shops, passed through the alembic of library and museum into action again. (Dewey, 1900, p. 89).

The actual new building for the School of Education, completed in 1903, was designed to follow this ideal model.[4]

Dewey also spent considerable time in visiting museums and consistently included them in his conception of education. For example, shortly after arriving in Chicago, while his wife and older children were in Europe, he writes to her, "I haven't been invited out today and am going to see the Columbian Museum, as it's a 'free' day—alone and great will be the joy thereof " (Dewey, 1894).

Visits to museums were a regular feature of life at the Chicago Laboratory School. The University Museum and the Field Columbian Museum (which at that time was close to the school, at the site of the present Chicago Museum of Science and Industry) were both integral parts of an extensive program of excursions that connected school life with the world outside.

> During 1896–97, an hour and a half was set aside on Monday mornings for trips to the Field Columbian Museum. … The younger children had a plot of ground … where they often went to observe seasonal changes in nature. Older children went to the university laboratories to see such instruments as the interferometer and spectroscope. There were also longer trips—to the quarry on Stony Island where glacial markings were observed, to the cotton mills in Aurora to see the spinning of cotton, and others to Ravinia to see the clay bluffs, to Miller Station to see the sand dunes and desert and to Sixty-third Street and the city limits to see a typical prairie area (DePencier, 1967, p. 33).

His recommendations to the Turkish government after reviewing education in that country shortly after the establishment of the new republic, include advice familiar to any reader of *The School and Society*: The school building should support the progressive educational program and thus should include a museum.

> The construction of the school building bears a closer relation to the kind of instruction given, and the methods of school discipline and instruction, than is usually believed. … No steady development of progressive education is possible without buildings which have proper sanitary and toilet facilities, places for manual training, domestic science, drawing and art, library, museum etc. (Dewey, 1924, p. 303)

Progressive Museum Educators

Museum educators in the early twentieth century echoed Dewey's writings on education. Louise Connolly, the educational advisor at the Newark Museum describes her work in language of progressive education.

> Then came the modern movement in pedagogy. It took off the shackles of dead forms that had trammeled the feet of teachers, and bade them walk. Some do not know to this day that their feet are free; but many are treading with firm step the uphill path that leads to high achievement just because they know enough to study the child as well as the subject . . . So we take our children to see the real thing, whatever that may be, and then to the museum where hand specimens of it may be found to remind us of it, and then we reduce our knowledge of it to language, and, finally, we look into books to be reminded by language of our experience-gained knowledge.
>
> The whole city administration in any progressive city is a museum. A class reciting upon the function of courts has seen a court in session. The city itself is a still larger and fuller museum. A class desiring to sketch trees sits in the park or on its school-house doorstep for the lesson. A class in United States history gathers about the statue of Washington. Rivers are studied on a river's brink. (Connolly, 1914a, p. 7).

Like so many progressive educators then and now, Connolly, formerly a public school teacher and administrator, was also active in progressive politics. She was an ardent feminist and supporter of women's suffrage. While addressing a meeting of the National Municipal League in 1914, she emphasized that schools had difficulties in meeting their civic responsibilities because "Training for citizenship is in the hands of those [i.e. women] who can never be citizens," and observed that when male teachers were appointed, "they constitute an element of weakness" because they lacked "that valuable training which comes from competition with one's peers." She pointed out that men were "levitated into positions of administrative power not because of achievement, but because of sex," and that once appointed to positions of authority, they "are subject to influences that make civic courage hard to come by" (Connolly, 1914b, p. xx).

Progressive Museum Education in the post-World War II period

The combination of pedagogy and political aims, a constant theme in the progressive school education literature, is reflected as well in the history of museum education. In the 1960s, when progressive politics – including progressive education concepts – were revived in both museums and schools, many such connections were made. Two noteworthy examples from this period are described below.

The decade from the mid 1960s into the 1970s was a period of intense progressive political action. The "miracle congress" of 1964-65 passed civil rights legislation, initiated the major federal medical insurance programs and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that widened federal oversight of education among a wider spectrum of progressive political action. In schools, there was a major expansion of "hands-on" science education as well as a general movement to include experiential opportunities for children. This "open education" movement brought progressive pedagogy into schools and supported

sociopolitical changes: school integration, more equitable school funding and improving educational opportunities for disadvantaged children. Parallel efforts were initiated simultaneously in the museum world.

The Emergence of Modern Science Centers

In a twelve-month period in 1968-69 three museums opened that dramatically changed the landscape for exhibiting science to the public (Ogawa, Loomis, & Crain, 2009). The Exploratorium in San Francisco, the Lawrence Hall of Science on the campus of the University of California in Berkeley and the Toronto Science Center all promoted science education through interactive exhibits and programs that allowed visitors to manipulate materials and perform experiments to an extent never attempted before. Although these museums can be seen as the modern interpretation of earlier science-technology museums, exemplified in the 19th century by technology collections and industrial expositions and later, early in the 20th century, by science and technology museums, this "third generation" focused more intensely on public education through interactive, experiential exhibitions than on building collections or promoting particular technologies or industries, as had been typical previously (Friedman, 2007).

More significantly, the newer institutions were closely associated with post-World War Two efforts to reform education. As Semper (2007, p. 147) points out, "These new places were born out of the confluence of the learner-centered educational movement of the mid-1960s and the investigation-focused science education reform movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s."

The Exploratorium illustrates this progressive aspect in both its pedagogic and political dimensions: its founder Frank Oppenheimer had attended the Ethical Culture School in New York, a progressive elementary school where John Dewey had sent his two younger daughters only a few years earlier. This school was started to provide educational opportunities for workers' children. Felix Adler, founder of the Ethical Culture movement and principal of the school, was Dewey's colleague at Columbia, and Dewey lectured to teachers at the school. The school provided a pedagogically progressive curriculum as well as a strong commitment to educate students to live in an "ethical culture" that promotes tolerance and greater social justice. These values underlie the mission of the school to this day. In founding the Exploratorium, Oppenheimer brought not only his skills as an experimental physicist and his experiences from a life-long habit of action, but also his progressive social-political background. In an interview, he says, "I grew up in a tradition where public education was a service of society and I believe a museum really is fundamental and should be a basic service of society" (Exploratorium, 2012a).

Figure1. *Frank Oppenheimer and a visitor,*
Credit: Nancy Rodger, © Exploratorium, www.exploratorium.edu, Reproduced by permission

Oppenheimer was active in left wing politics as a young adult, and he and his wife Jackie joined the Communist Party in the 1930s, as did many liberals at that time. During the McCarthy years, Oppenheimer lost his academic job as a result of his political associations, and spent ten years as a rancher before regaining an academic position through friends at the University of Colorado. There he developed and built the equipment for an inquiry-based freshman physics lab where students could come and work on their own time, and not only complete course requirements, but also undertake their own investigations. Oppenheimer's laboratory/workshop pedagogic style for a museum evolved at the University of Colorado, and later came to characterize the Exploratorium's interactive exhibits: many components of this "library of experiments" built while he was teaching at the University of Colorado (Oppenheimer & Correll, 1964) later appeared on the floor of the Exploratorium as interactive exhibits.

Figure 2: *Exploratorium interior, 1977; Credit: L. Erik Van Cort, © Exploratorium, www.exploratorium.edu, Reproduced by permission*

After returning to academic life in Boulder, Oppenheimer also participated in school science education reform, another source of ideas for the Exploratorium. In 1962, his Colorado colleague and close friend David Hawkins was appointed founding director of the Elementary Science Study (ESS) (1962–1971), a project at the Education Development Center in Newton, Massachusetts (Romney & Neuendorffer, 1973). Several units (for example, *Optics Table* and *Colored Shadows*), now common science center exhibits worldwide, were originally developed at ESS as elementary school science activities. The ESS curriculum—deliberately developed not as a sequential curriculum but as a collection of approximately sixty units, all suggesting science inquiries that students and teachers could conduct—was strongly influenced by Dewey's educational ideas. The staff at ESS, composed of scientists and teachers, included many individuals with strong backgrounds in progressive education.

David Hawkins, a philosopher who wrote extensively about Dewey, recognized the centrality of Dewey's vision for education to his overall world-view.

> What I find most admirable (and comforting) about Dewey's work is that he, almost uniquely among philosophers since Plato, sees education as a topic so large—larger even than politics and religion—and so pervasive, as to be a kind of final challenge and focus for all philosophy." (D. Hawkins, 2002, pp. 1-2)

Hawkins had served as the official historian for the Manhattan Project during the war. His wife, Frances Pockman Hawkins, an extraordinary teacher who wrote one of the seminal books on working with students with learning disabilities (F. Hawkins, 1969), also contributed to the ESS work. The Oppenheimers spent at least one summer in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Frank worked at an ESS summer school.

Figure 3: *Philip Morrison and David Hawkins.*
Credit*: Reprinted by permission of Hawkins Centers of Learning*

Physicist Philip Morrison, chairman of the ESS Advisory Committee, was another close friend who was both politically active and involved with science education, and was a frequent presence at ESS conferences and workshops, as was his wife Phyllis Singer. At a two-day symposium in honor of Philip Morrison's 70th birthday, the keynote speakers were Hans Bethe (Morrison's former Cornell colleague and Nobel laureate), Carl Sagan (who shared Morrison's interest in searching for evidence of life in the universe), and Lillian Weber, acknowledging Morrison's active engagement with progressive education. Weber, an early childhood specialist at City College of New York, was instrumental in bringing progressive education practices developed in post-war England—as the Labor government championed more egalitarian educational opportunities for all children—to the United States (see Weber, 1971). She developed the "Open Corridor" programs in New York City schools that allowed for interactive materials-based activities in school corridors, and opened a Teacher Center Workshop at City College, where teachers could become comfortable using more materials than were usually available in elementary classrooms. The Morrisons spent the summer of 1971 in San Francisco working at the Exploratorium and spent additional time out west during each of several subsequent summers. David and Frances Hawkins were also frequent visitors.

These physicists who were engaged in education also had in common their political involvement with social justice causes, and more specifically, their desire to use their skills to contribute something positive and practical for society after their years developing the atomic bomb and other military products during the Second World War. The Manhattan Project and the Radiation Lab at MIT (where the U.S. effort for perfecting radar was housed), two major government-funded scientific operations that demonstrated the ability of large, well funded, targeted projects to achieve significant results. After the war, these same scientists were eager to apply their intellectual and organizational talents to more constructive causes. Science education, a neglected activity in most elementary schools and taught by traditional methods in secondary schools, was an appropriate choice that linked their technical skills with a progressive social purpose. Frank Oppenheimer, David Hawkins, and Philip Morrison, all of whom were at Los Alamos during the war, became involved in popularizing science and in influencing the way it was taught. This community of scientists was deeply involved in the development of the Exploratorium.

> At heart, Frank built the Exploratorium as a political institution. Its ultimate goal was to get people so addicted to understanding that they would somehow become inoculated against the clever deceptions of some advertisers and politicians. He would persuade them to use those brains of theirs to get involved, to add to the collective wisdom—the only true way, he thought, to solve our pressing global problems (Gell-Mann, 2009, p. xiv).

As one staff member commented, "The bomb gang used to hang out here. Most amazing group I've ever seen. They would come summers and come spend a lot of time with Explainers"[5] (Ogawa, Loomis, & Cain, 2009, p. 281).

Their faith that better science education—based on interactive exploration of the natural world through close observation, experimentation, weighing evidence, and critical thinking in the Deweyan sense—could lead to a better world was repeatedly mentioned by this generation of scientists. Jerrold Zacharias, the founder and director of the Education Development Center (the parent organization of ESS), expressed this conviction most emphatically and directly. Zacharias, a student of Nobel laureate Isidor Rabi and a prominent physicist at the MIT Radiation Lab during the war, had demonstrated administrative skills as well as technical ability to become a key member of the wartime physics establishment. He helped to build up MIT's physics department in the early post war years, and served on presidential science advisory committees under presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson (Goldstein, 1992). He even developed a simple yet sophisticated "formula for initiating educational reform projects." And he had the "ability to bring together first-class minds … [a] reputation for successful innovation and … access to the decision makers in Washington and elsewhere" (Goldstein, 1992, pp. 219–220). But perhaps most importantly, he had a clear motive for all these peacetime efforts, namely to promote democracy and social justice. His faith in the power of science to improve society, not through its technical accomplishments but through the potential of science education to help people think clearly, convinced him of the need for education that promotes thinking and inquiry. Two of Zacharias's public statements on this subject are unequivocal:

> The reason I was willing to do it [develop a new high school physics course, his first effort in K-12 science education] was not because I wanted more physics or more physicists or more science; it was because I believed then, and I believe now, that in order to get people to be decent in this world, they have to have some kind of intellectual training that involves knowing [about] Observation, Evidence, the Basis for Belief (Goldstein, 1992, pp. 164-165).[6]

> It was largely a matter of social conscience, I believe, that motivated us [scientists] to school work. As scientists, we seek evidence before we try to create order, or orderliness, and we do not expect, nor even hope for, complete proof. … We live in a world of necessarily partial proof, built on evidence, which, although plentiful, is always limited in scope, amount, and style. Nevertheless, uncompleted as our theories may be, they all enjoy, in a sense, the benefits of due process of law. Dogmatism cannot enter and unsupported demagoguery has a tough time with us. A Hitler or a McCarthy could not survive in a society which demands evidence which can be subjected to examination, to reexamination, to doubt, to question, to cross-examination. It may be this lesson that gives us a missionary zeal (Zacharias, 1965, p. 102).

The overt association of science education with promotion of democratic concepts connects closely with Dewey's faith in the potential for science as a model process for improving society.

Museum Governance: The Boston Children's Museum

Another aspect of Dewey's conception of progressive education was the effort to make schools themselves models of democratic practice. As Mahew and Edwards (1936, p. 466) in their definitive description of Dewey's school point out, "It was thought that education could prepare the young for future social life only when the school was itself a cooperative society on a small scale." The politics of the 1960s encouraged more communal organization for schools. Similar efforts were found in museums.

A long established museum that embraced the optimistic mood and progressive educational trends of the '60s, both pedagogically and politically, was the Boston Children's Museum (BCM),[7] an institution whose evolution closely paralleled the broader progressive activities of this period (Hein, 2012). In 1962, Michael Spock joined the BCM as director. Spock came to the museum from a checkered early career as a struggling student at Antioch College and at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, but with a wide range of experience. Like Frank Oppenheimer, he had attended one of the Ethical Culture Schools in New York. He connects his own work directly with the progressive education he experienced: "Frank and I were educated in such powerful ways that we replicated those experiences at the Children's Museum and the Exploratorium" (Spock, 2012).

Figure 4: *Patricia Steuert, Michael Spock, Jeri Robinson and Elaine Heumann Gurian ca. 1970;* Credit*: Courtesy of Boston Children's Museum, Reproduced by permission.*

Over several years, the staff at the BCM converted an old-fashioned, sleepy museum, with its collection of dollhouses and natural history objects, into a lively, interactive center for learning. The staff was not organized into the traditional museum structure of separate curatorial and education departments, typically with curators having higher status than educators, but into clusters based on content or activity:

> One of the most often-asked questions by other museum professionals of BCM staff was, 'why don't you have an education department?' The simple answer was that the whole institution was focused on education; it was part of every department . . . In the '70s the BCM was organized into several departments: Visitor Center, Teacher Services, Community Services and Support Services. (Merrill & Steuert, 2012).

The organizational structure of these clusters, modified several times during twenty-three years of Spock's directorship, was always intended to facilitate a focus on the audience: the children and parents who came to the museum, rather than on the collection. In 1968, the museum moved its visitor center into a space previously occupied by an auditorium, where "young visitors could now handle, poke, try on, stroke, smell, and even crawl inside [some exhibits]. There were electronic calculators, a giant aerial photomap of the metropolitan area in which a young visitor could locate his own home, a life-size, authentically furnished wigwam, and simple animation equipment that a child could use to make a 13-frame film" (Newsom & Silver, 1978, p. 124). The BCM staff developed MATChBox (Materials and Activities for Teachers and Children), a collection of hands-on learning materials that were distributed to schools[8]; they also mounted a number of daring exhibitions on difficult topics, such as disability and loss, at that time not usually addressed at children's (or any other) museums.

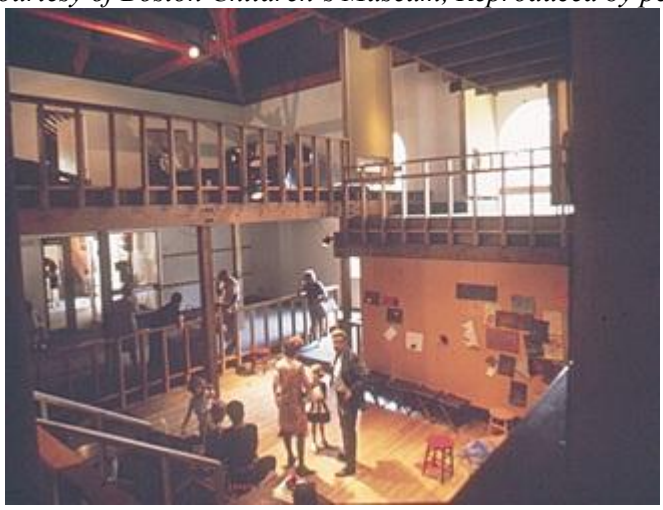
The museum's mission expanded to include as much of the community as could be reached: staff worked with hospitals, community centers, and other agencies, in addition to schools. In 1979, the museum moved from an earlier location at the edge of a middle class neighborhood to a refurbished warehouse that was nearer public transportation and downtown Boston. A "Playspace" was developed, a setting where young children could play and parents could observe them and perhaps learn about child development (Robinson, 2012). Lead developer Jerri Robinson described Playspace as part of the "silent revolution" promoted by the BCM that essentially introduced both progressive social and educational practices into museums, a model that has since been copied worldwide: the museum pioneered baby-changing spaces in men's bathrooms and generally promoted safe public spaces for children and parents to be together.

The BCM's activities matched the spirit of the times.

> The museum's social and pedagogical goals coincided with nationwide concerns for educational equity—a general alarm over the gaps in opportunity and achievement among different races, gender and economic classes—and the need for materials to enable experiential learning" (Merrill & Steuert, 2012).

There was considerable overlap between the museum staff's efforts and those of colleagues who were working in other progressive educational settings: Phylis Singer Morrison was a staff member at the museum, Bernie Zabrowski, an ESS staff member moved to the Children's Museum and developed a number of pedagogically progressive interactive exhibitions that have been adopted by children's museums worldwide, and close connections were developed with public schools and progressive educators at local teacher training institutions. The museum started a recycle center, where teachers in materials-rich open classrooms could collect supplies for their growing use of hands-on educational activities.

Figure 5. *Boston Children's Museum, Visitor Center,1970's.*
Credit: *Courtesy of Boston Children's Museum, Reproduced by permission.*



But equally important were the challenges that the museum set for itself, to evaluate its own organizational structure and to consider the relationship between internal structure and external goals. Since one aspect of Dewey's progressive vision for schools was that they should function as models of democratic practice and should be organized as communities where children had rights, where teachers participated in administration, and where teachers' traditional authoritarian character would be seriously reduced (Tanner, 1997) the Boston Children's Museum experimented with its own administrative organization. Spock and his colleagues (Spock, 2013) addressed these issues as they explored alternative administrative structures. Reflecting on their work, Elaine Heumann Gurian describes a heady atmosphere that illustrates the democratic atmosphere of their endeavor:

> There was a respect about the humanity of each of the individuals who worked there which was different than the understanding that we agreed with each other which we most certainly did not, or that we got along together all the time, which we did not always either. But there was a belief that everybody was bringing something to the table of value, that we could not individually do this ourselves and that it was truly a collective endeavor, in which, regardless of the hierarchy … cumulatively made what we did happen (Gurian, 2012).

To explain the facilitating organizational structure, Gurian postulates:

> We were the equivalent of a commune. We were, at a time in America when collective action had a brand new and politically viable currency … where the destruction of the single leader and the followers was going on all around us. We were all politically left wing as was Michael Spock, and we had a deeply—each of us individually—had a deeply held belief in the value of individuals and the value of inclusion, and we worked desperately hard to make that happen. Our definition of what that meant was different, but we were solidly behind each other about communal and corporate responsibility. We were each other's brothers and sisters. And it was much closer to being a commune than it was at the time a business model (Gurian, 2012).

The progressive idea that museums might reflect the democratic culture they promote continues to be espoused by some members of the museum profession. In 1980, Jette Sandahl created a women's museum in Aarhus, Denmark that was organized in the most egalitarian manner possible within Danish museum legal structures (Morgensen, 1989). More

recently, Janes (2009) has argued that museums should consider an administrative model in which the director assumes the role of *primus inter pares*, rather than a position as a lonely leader in full command, but isolated from the rest of the staff.

Conclusion

These examples of progressive museum education illustrate the parallel development of progressive practice in schools and museums as well as the combination of progressive pedagogy with progressive social goals. It is logical that progressive education, with its commitment to liberal, community-minded goals, should thrive in times (such as the progressive era of the early 20th century and the 1960s) when the broader political arena is more receptive to liberal views. It is also not surprising that such programs flourish simultaneously in schools and museums.

Museums, like schools, are educational institutions (Hein, 2006). The collections and fabricated exhibitions become meaningful only when visitors are exposed to them. Although some modern art museums argue that their primary mission is collection and preservation, the general trend in the larger museum profession is toward recognition of the primacy of the educational role of museums. Since education always has a purpose, the issue of what role museum education plays in a democratic society is significant. At the present time, the political climate in the US is not nearly as accepting of progressive views as it was in the 1960s, either in education or more generally; on the contrary, schools increasingly emphasize competition, harsh disciplinary methods and a focus on basic core subjects to the neglect of arts and humanities. In comparison, progressive education continues to have a strong presence within museums, despite the fact that they, too, suffer from the diminished social interest in funding public institutions.[9] Both here and in other countries, progressive efforts—such as exhibits that address social issues, educational programs that emphasize social concerns like climate change, or a public conversation about the structure and functioning of museums (see for example Janes & Conaty, 2005; Sandell & Nightingale, 2012)—are, at least, in the mainstream of museological dialogue and practice. We can only hope that museum educators will continue to contribute to the legacy of progressive education worldwide.

Endnotes

[1] The article is based on material from Hein, G. E. (2012). *Progressive museum practice: John Dewey and democracy*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

[2] Early European "public" museums often had very restrictive admissions policies, open limited hours and only to selected guests who qualified as gentlemen, scholars or artists (Abt, 2006).

[3] A common criticism of an exhibition is to refer to it as "A book on the wall," indicating that it fails to engage visitors beyond what could have been learned from reading a book.

[4] "The space on the third floor immediately over the library has been assigned to the museum. The museum will be furnished with gas and water. It is intended that the museum shall be used largely for practical work in connection with all the departments of the school" (Dewey, 1903, p. 343).

[5] "Explainers are students from the Bay Area and from around the world who come together to participate in a teaching and learning experience at the Exploratorium—a museum of science, art, and human perception. Explainers learn exhibits, facilitate visitor-exhibit interaction and support general museum operations" (Exploratorium, 2012a).

[6] Goldstein points out that "Observation, Evidence, the Basis for Belief" formed Zacharias's mantra. "Jerrold always capitalized them. They were for him as fundamental as breathing" (Goldstein 1992, p. 344, note 26).

[7] The history of the Boston Children's Museum during this period is documented online at http://bcmstories.com/.

[8] The production of circulating materials for schools is a practice long associated with progressive museum pedagogy. In the early years of the 20th century, the St. Louis school department had its own educational museum and produced kits for distribution to schools (Rathmann, 1915; Zucker, 1989). Progressive museum educator Laura Mary Bragg invented her own miniature exhibitions to send to schools as she developed an educational program first at the Charleston Museum in Charleston, SC, from 1910-1930 and later at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, Massachusetts (See Allen, 2001).

[9] In the United States, unlike most of the rest of the world, museums are primarily private non-profit organizations, not public the way most schools are. But they are "public" in the sense that they intend to serve the entire public without restrictions.

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