

Workshop 1B: Saturated Play - a disruptive approach to exhibits, queues and diversity in museums and science centres

Tuesday 3 September, 9.00am – 12.30pm

Background

Games are micro worlds – they have their own rules. Whilst playing within the walls of a game, existing social and cultural hierarchies can be challenged. A teenager can beat a professor, an octogenarian a sprinter – or vice versa – it all depends on the game they are playing.

We developed a framework called saturated play which is designed to encourage science centres, staff, managers and visitors to be brave and curious. There are many examples where games and gamification have been used to focus a dispersed online community to share a common goal. With saturated play we are looking at the benefits of extending the scope of the game to include live activities covering museums, heritage sites, towns or multiple organisations.

Saturated play can help engage new audiences. Hard to reach audiences are not hard to reach – they are just doing other things, playing other games. In the workshop we will find ways to open doors and build bridges. We will illustrate how turning visitors into players can create new access points into museums and science centres or building links to specific organisations or groups.

Saturated play can also create new pathways within an organisation to link apparently unconnected topics or objects creating rewarding focal points around over looked or frustrating aspects of the visit – for example can we make the queue the best part of the visitor experience? Under used galleries, museums with low visitor numbers and sadly ignored artefacts are not wrong or misplaced – its just no one has explained that they are vital parts of a gameyet.

We are a group of trained anthropologists, scientists, artists and educational practitioners who have been drawn together by a shared vision of how games and play can break down barriers and create new opportunities for social and cultural participation.

The workshop will commence with real world examples which have been created by the presenters and will invite attendees to unleash the power of games. The workshop will then invite attendees to work in groups to create games to open the doors of their institution to an as yet untapped group of visitors.

Presenter profiles:

Kate Kneale, Designer and creative producer.

Kate leads HKD an international design studio working in museums and science centres. She has devised the GEEK festival of play and games and is the convenor of the GameLab in Ecsite. She has been developing Saturated Play and the use of town wide games to address issues of diversity and inclusion in Science Centres and Museums.

Richard Houghton, Creative Director HKD, Fellow Singapore Science Centre.

Richard has been designing for science centres and museums for over thirty years. He has seen the move from science museum to science centre and is now looking at the role science centres will play in 2020 and beyond. He has developed HERO exhibits (Hook Everyone into Research Opportunities) social focal points which use games and play to deliver key learning points.

Shivani Singhal

Shivani is an enthusiastic game player, a lover of stories and constantly curious. She spends most of her time running Dharohar, a non-profit that aims to create a world where a love for lifelong learning and for contributing to your community becomes the norm. Dharohar runs structured volunteering programmes for 1700+ volunteers each year, ranging from STEM activities to debating to art. Games are embedded into lots of our volunteer training and student programmes as they quickly break down barriers and invite participation. Currently Dharohar is working on creating an independent centre (the Third space) where people can come to explore diverse interest, learn new skills and become part of a creative community.

Dr Bryce Kositz, AFHEA

Bryce is a recent PhD graduate from the Australian National University in modern Chinese history and a bestselling author of game supplements on the Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition marketplace, DMs Guild. He is very interested in the intersection between advanced learning and gamification, inventing and running multiple games as part of his classes on Chinese history.