

Social Responsibility and Practices of National Natural History Museums in Interpretation of Scientific Knowledge and Communication with Audiences: “Brain: The Biology of Mind” Special Exhibition of the National Museum of Natural Science as Example

Yi-Chung LIU

Curator Assistant

Department of Exhibition, National Museum of Natural Science

Abstract

In recent years, museums have undergone a change in direction with people/visitors becoming the main subjects for attention. This has gradually led to increased importance placed on communication and interaction between museums and visitors. The most direct methods are museum exhibitions, which serve as channels for dialogue between museums and the public. Due to differences in the attributes of museums, objectives and characteristics also differ in terms of methods used to interact with visitors and fulfillment of social responsibility. In this paper, national-level natural history museums are the focus with the attributes of science museums in particular discussed. The author believes that science museums have the social responsibility to interpret scientific knowledge and to convey that knowledge to visitors. Therefore, in these museums, the content of exhibitions often follows an integrated storyline with condensed and limited explanatory text. This is usually complemented by creative exhibition design, regular and non-regular guided tours, and educational activities. The information contained within the exhibition is made easy to understand to achieve the objective of popularizing science. In this paper, “Brain: The Biology of Mind” Special Exhibition of National Museum of Natural Science serves as an example to discuss how museums can create communication models to convey scientific knowledge through interpretive exhibitions. To take this a step further, visitors to the exhibition were surveyed through the use of a questionnaire to understand whether they were able to absorb the information that the museum wanted to convey after visiting the exhibition and taking part in educational activities. An additional aim of this study was to understand the social responsibility and practices of national natural history museums in interpretation of scientific knowledge and communication with audiences.

Keywords: National Museum, Natural History, Interpretation of Scientific Knowledge, Social Responsibility, Popular Science Education