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The Participatory Museum



Synopsis

Visitor participation is a hot topic in the contemporary world of museums, art galleries, science centers, libraries and cultural organizations. How can your institution do it and do it well? The Participatory Museum is a practical guide to working with community members and visitors to make cultural institutions more dynamic, relevant, essential places. Museum consultant and exhibit designer Nina Simon weaves together innovative design techniques and case studies to make a powerful case for participatory practice.

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Customer Reviews

In *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon argues that the social web has changed the way that people relate to one another and the world, and makes a case for introducing participatory design to cultural institutions. *The Participatory Museum* offers compelling real-life examples and case studies of cultural institutions that have adopted new media strategies to help fulfill their institutional missions. These new media strategies do not always (and often do not) take place on the web. Rather, Simon is concerned with gleaning knowledge from web and new media interactions, and apply this knowledge to the real world. Simon looks for inspiration in unexpected places. The case studies and examples that Simon cites are not limited to the museum world nor even to cultural institutions. She broadens her case studies to include for-profit corporations, including Netflix, Nike, and Harrah's Casinos. Translating the participatory nature of social media to a museum sounds like a great idea. But as Simon is quick to acknowledge, this process is harder than it sounds. So how

can museums design good participatory experiences? The bulk of the book is devoted to answering that question, so I will just briefly summarize some of Simon's most compelling points. First, Simon acknowledges that not everyone WANTS to participate. For this reason, Simon suggests that participatory techniques should only be one of the interpretive techniques used by a museum. Second, even when people do want to participate, they will participate in different ways. Third, the use of cutting-edge technology is not necessary to build a good participatory experience. Some of the options that Simon explores are decidedly low-tech.

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