

Play On: The Importance of Adult-Only Play Events at Children's Museums

Devon Kelley

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

University of Washington

2016

Committee:

Seth Margolis

Jessica Luke

Carla Bitter

Susan Nolan

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Museology

© Copyright 2016
Devon Kelley

University of Washington

Abstract

Play On: The Importance of Adult-Only Play Events at Children's Museums

Devon Kelley

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Instructor Seth Margolis
Museology

Play is an important part of an adult visitor's museum experience. While recent research shows that adult visitors benefit from opportunities to play much like their younger counterparts, many museums are slow to incorporate play into their exhibits and programming for adults. Recognizing the benefit of play for visitors, some children's museums are beginning to host adult-only events so older visitors can play with their exhibits and experience their programs. The purpose of this research is to examine adult-only play events at Madison Children's Museum, Hands On Children's Museum, and Children's Museum of Phoenix to understand the museums' motivation to host these events, the benefits to adult visitors, and how

museums in general can incorporate opportunities to play for their adult audience members. Results indicate that these adult-only play events are being well-received by audiences, increasing attendance numbers, and attracting new audiences to the museums. Findings also show that these events are financially lucrative for the museum and could be adapted for use by many museum types.

Keywords: adult visitors, children's museums, play, learning, visitor experience.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose Statement	3
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
What is Play?	6
How is Play Learning?	8
The Importance of Play for Adults	10
Adults Want to Play	11
Adult Play in (Children’s) Museums	14
What’s Good for the Goose is Good for the Gander.....	17
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	19
Purpose Statement and Research Goals.....	19
Methods	19
Research Sites and Sampling Protocol	20
Interview Candidates	23
The Instrument.....	23
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & DISCUSSION	32
Summary of Data Collected	32
Qualitative Event Data	34
Positive Visitor Reaction and Audience Building.....	34
Evidence of Adult Play	35
Benefits to Adult Visitors.....	36
Benefits to Museums.....	38
Limitations to Generalizing Research	42
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	45
Summary.....	45
Recommendations.....	46
Conclusion	47
WORKS CITED	48
APPENDIX A: INSTRUMENT	51

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Google search results of "adult play event children's museum"..... 21
Figure 2: Google search results of "adult only children's museum"..... 21
Figure 3: Google search results of "adult play children's museum"..... 22
Figure 4: Quantitative Event Information..... 33
Figure 5: Qualitative Visitor Demographics.....33

Acknowledgements

I'm so grateful to the following people for their support and insight.

A resounding "thank you!" to my thesis committee. Carla Bitter, your enthusiasm from the very beginning made me think play was a topic worth exploring. Jessica Luke, your great insight on evaluation is so appreciated. Susan Nolen, you jumped right in without even meeting me, encouraging right from the get-go. Nick Visscher, my first chair: thank you for getting me started on the right path. And Seth Margolis, thank you for being the best, most playful thesis chair this Spokanite could ever hope to have.

Thank you to the wonderful contacts at my interview sites. Kia Karlen at Madison Children's Museum: you are one of the most quotable people I've had the pleasure of working with. Alex Wurth at Children's Museum of Phoenix: your love for your community and work are inspiring. Adrienne Testa at Hands On Children's Museum in Olympia: your flexibility and enthusiasm are a joy. Thank you all for making this research possible.

To my cohort: thank you for sharing your toys with me. To my team at work: thank you for putting up with my bizarre schedule for two years and insisting I put school first. To my mom, dad, and brother: you were my first and always will be my favorite playmates. And finally to my sweet husband: thank you for always making time for play, and for bringing so much fun to my life.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing." -

George Bernard Shaw

Adults do not lose the capacity or desire to play, but often lack the opportunity and physical space to do so (Grenier, 2010, p. 78). Play (defined in Chapter 2) is important for myriad reasons: it has been shown to increase self-esteem and calmness, (Ward-Wimmer, 2003) is an important component of adult learning, (Grenier, 2010, p. 78; Diamond, 2015) and is "one of six components of an intrinsically motivated museum experience"¹ (Grenier, 2010, p. 77). And while museums are well-placed to facilitate learning via play, (Grenier, 2010, p. 78; Diamond, 2015) play is often absent from adult museum experiences (Grenier, 2010, p. 82). Adult visitors can and will learn through play at museums, but only if they are given the opportunity to do so.

Historically, children's museums place children as their primary audience, with adults seen as chaperones and facilitators, but not learners (Roberts et. all, 2010, p. 4; Downey et. all, 2010, p. 15). New evidence suggests that children's museums are beginning to view adult visitors as "an audience in and of themselves"

¹ Play, along with curiosity, confidence, challenge, control, and communication, is one of six components of an intrinsically motivated museum experience" (Grenier, 2010, p. 77).

(Roberts, et. all, 2010, p. 4). Considering this new approach, some children's museums have started hosting adult-only events and programs. This allow adults to experience exhibits and programming without making adults feel self-conscious for playing or conflicting with institutional admission policies. Children's museums are well-placed to offer play opportunities to adult visitors, as they already view play as an important part of learning, (ACM, n.d.) and have the infrastructure, skills, and reputation in place to facilitate play.

"One might assume that there would be much active research on play in museums. However, relatively little is known about how visitors use museums for play" (Diamond, 2015). According to researcher Judy Diamond, researching the connection between museum visitors and play

...could help clarify the relationship between play and learning, and it could give useful guidance on how museum exhibits might be designed to facilitate play. Finally, furthering our understanding of play makes possible an appreciation for the educational role of museums, not as institutions for teaching about specific information, but as institutions that encourage people to develop the desire and skills for lifelong learning." (Diamond, 2015).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to examine adult-only play events at children's museums to understand these programs' potential benefits to museums and their adult audiences.

If it is shown that these adult-only events are successful, the field benefits in several ways. First, it would support the research that states play is an important component of adult learning and engagement and move this notion into the museum sphere. If the events are well-attended and the visitors are playing, it shows that adult visitors want and seek out play opportunities. Secondly, it would further encourage children's museums to consider adults as another audience that benefits from their programming and exhibits. Once adult learners are recognized as a viable audience, children's museums can further explore how to engage them specifically. Additionally, if adult-only events are fulfilling a public request, then that museum is meeting a community need, supporting the best practices of its governing body and industry (Standards, 2012,p. 3). Understanding visitor reaction to these events will inform children's museums when it comes to successful marketing strategies for future adults-only play events. Further, successful/self-sustaining adult-only play events can be a revenue-generator or sponsorship opportunity, which are obvious benefits to any museum. Finally, compiled research of how and why children's museums support adult play will benefit other types of

museums and the larger education field: this research will be useful as other types of institutions expand their own programming to include adult play opportunities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

More than any other informal learning institution, children's museums recognize the importance of play in learning: play is central to what makes a children's museum a children's museum (ACM, n.d.). Jean Piaget's seminal work on childhood development concluded that play is an essential part of a child's learning (Piaget, 1951). Building from that work, contemporary pediatricians, psychologists, and education specialists agree that play is a necessary stage of learning, contributing to meaning-making, skill building, language comprehension, motor-skills, symbolism comprehension, and more (White, 2012, p. 3).

The Association of Children's Museums charges their member museums in 22 countries to "create playful, interactive learning experiences" that "reflect their diverse communities" (ACM, n.d.). Children's museums are clearly serving a receptive community: over 30 million children and their accompanying adults visited children's museums in 2007 (ACM, n.d.). That's over 30 million visitors who had the opportunity to explore, learn, and connect via the main tenet of children's museums: play.

While play has been accepted as important to development and learning for children for almost 75 years, contemporary research is also exploring the importance of play for adult learners. These results show that adults, too, want and benefit from playful learning experiences (Grenier, 2010, p. 77), and certain recent

trends support the theory that play is important to adult visitors as well (Umpathy, 2015). While in general museums are slow to meet that demand for adult visitors, some children's museums are starting to fulfil this need with after-hours adult-only events that allow adult visitors to engage with programming and exhibits.

Children's museums already have the infrastructure and reputation to support learning through play. Children's museums are finding that adults want to interact with their exhibits, even without acting as a facilitator for their children (Grenier, 2010, p. 77). Several museums actively responding to this need are the Hands On Children's Museum in Olympia, Washington; the Madison Children's Museum in Madison, Wisconsin; and the Thinkery (formerly Austin Children's Museum) in Austin, Texas. Programs like these are proving through attendance numbers and feedback that adult visitors want to play at museums, and that children's museums can provide valuable examples to the industry on how to fulfill that visitor need.

What is Play?

Play is one of those tricky concepts that "adults can intuitively identify" and yet a "full consensus on a formal definition continues to elude the researchers and theorists who study it" (White, 2012). Stuart Brown, the founder of the National Institute for Play, defines play as "anything that spontaneously is done for its own

sake" (White, 2012). More specifically, modern definitions of play focus on key, observable criteria that classify an action or activity as play (Piaget & Peterson, 2016). Using criteria ascribed by childhood development researchers (Krasnor & Pepler; Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg), the Minnesota Children's Museum defines play as an activity that meets the following: play is pleasurable; play is intrinsically motivated; play is process oriented; play is freely chosen; play is actively engaged; and play is non-literal (White, 2012). In consulting other primary source research work (Blanchard; Makedon; Pellegrini, Dupuis, and Smith), museum education researcher Robin Grenier concluded a similar definition: "play is a voluntary activity involving active cognitive and/or physical engagement that is pleasurable for its own sake and often includes some form of suspension of disbelief or make-believe quality" (Grenier, 2010, p. 78). Those definitions use different words to say the same thing: play is pleasurable, voluntary, engaging, non-literal, and personal.

One reason play is difficult to define is because it is so personal. An activity that is pleasurable, engaging, and personal will by nature vary from person to person. "Thus, play will manifest itself differently for individuals, and what one considers to be play, such as writing, cooking, or gardening, another will not" (Grenier, 2010, p. 78). Play may manifest differently for each museum visitor, but it will still be evident due to the presence of the above listed measures. Play behavior exists and manifests on a continuum, and can blend into guided activities and work

while maintaining its value. (White, 2012) Additionally, to be playful, a visitor must feel “free from the constraint of evaluation” (Grenier, 2010, p. 78). If a visitor feels they are being evaluated or judged for their playful behavior, it disrupts the “flow to play” and can terminate the behavior (Grenier, 2010, p. 78).

How is Play Learning?

The defining characteristics of play- that it is self-motivated, emotionally satisfying, and personally rewarding- also define “most human learning” in general (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 32). Play “leads one to the next stage of mastery” (White, 2012). For children, play is a crucial part of their development.

Having control over the course of one’s own learning, as in free play, promotes desire, motivation, and mastery (Erikson, 1985; Hurwitz, 2003). Children also learn how to seek out knowledge; play involves exploration, hypothesis testing, and discovery. What is more, all this is done in a safe, anxiety- and risk-free environment [i.e. a children’s museum] where children are free to test the limits of their knowledge and abilities with relatively few repercussions (Hirsch-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2003). They learn to have confidence in their ability to solve a problem, and they become resilient in the face of a challenge (Erikson, 1985; Hurwitz, 2003; Pepler & Ross, 1981). Play builds the foundation for a lifetime of learning.” (White, 2012)

Play has been cited as crucial to childhood learning and development by many highly-respected U.S. and international organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (White, 2012). "Play [...] serves as an avenue for children to practice social roles, learn to recognize and use symbols and signs, and socialize" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 39). Additionally, "[...]play actually fosters cognitive and social development" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 49).

Research shows that play benefits adult learners in similar ways. Broadly, the model of play (physical actions) informing mental connections is supported by the constructivist theory of knowledge, which argues that "humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas" (Piaget, 1951). Experiential learning, learning through reflecting and doing, requires that the learner be able to have active, free-choice activities to support learning (Piaget, 1951). In general, learning requires "a combination of emotional, physical, and mental action; it also requires an appropriate context within which to express itself" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 33). Through play, adults learn the same way that children do: the social, motor, and imaginative aspects of play inform and reinforce important concepts and norms.

The Importance of Play for Adults

“Play is just as pivotal for adults as it is for kids,” (Tartakovsky, 2012) and for more reasons than learning. Beyond solidifying skills and ideas, play is a critical component of mental health, personal relationships, and fostering greater societal connections (Keller, 2015). Play is used in couple’s therapy to help couples reinforce their connection and “explore other forms of emotional intimacy” (Tartakovsky, 2012). Play strengthens abstract reasoning skills (Grey, 2008). The US News and Health Report even has a top-ten reasons to play list. Play “can even facilitate deep connections between strangers and cultivate healing” (Tartakovsky, 2012).

Pretend play and make-believe play benefit humans because “during play, the brain is making sense of itself through simulation and testing. [...] In play [...] we are able to try out things without threatening our physical or emotional well-being” (Brown, 2009, p. 14). It’s a safe way to test ourselves and our hypotheses, to test new things and new thoughts. Even the act of daydreaming can constitute play and benefit adults. In children, “play’s process of capturing a pretend narrative and combing it with the reality of one’s experience in a playful setting [...] is how we develop our major personal understanding of how the world works” (Brown, 2009, p. 36). And an “examination of adult internal narratives (our stream of consciousness) reveals something similar” (Brown, 2009, p. 36). In imagining

scenarios, adults are “predicting the future and examining the consequences of our behavior before it takes place. Just like in children, adult streams of consciousness are enriched through the simulations of childlike imaginative play” (Brown, 2009, p. 36).

Even when a play activity appears purposeless, it still has value: “researchers have suggested that process orientation and a lack of obvious functional purpose may be the most important aspects of play (e.g., Pellegrini, 2009)” (White, 2012). The act of playing has worth in and of itself: even if it’s not directly building a skill, it’s contributing to a sense of relaxation, wellbeing, and fun (Tartakovsky, 2012). It has been shown that the act of play “shapes the brain and makes animals smarter and more adaptable. In higher animals, it fosters empathy and make possible complex social groups. [For humans,] play lies at the core of creativity and innovation” (Brown, 2009, p. 5).

Adults Want to Play

Recent years show an increase in the number of successful play opportunities for adults. In 2015, Amazon’s bestseller list was topped by two different adult coloring books; their commercial success is attributed to “a growing trend where more adults are seeking opportunities for play, largely due to the increased recognition of the health benefits it offers” (Umpathy, 2015). As of

February 2016, 3 of the top 20 Amazon bestsellers are coloring books specifically marketed as “adult coloring books” (Amazon, 2016). In 2014, nation-wide sales of adult coloring books was one-million dollars; In 2015, nation-wide sales topped 12 million (Quartz).

Among adult play opportunities on the rise include adult summer camp and adult pre-school. Camp Grounded is available in 3 states, offering unplugged summer camp experiences for adults (ages 18-80), and features a program complete with face painting, capture the flag, storytelling, sing-a-longs, arts and crafts, and other youth summer camp staples (Camp Grounded, n.d.) Over the past few years, Camp Grounded has had participants from “40 different states and twelve different countries,” showing this type of programming has a broad audience.

Preschool Mastermind is an adult preschool-style experience that opened in Brooklyn in 2015. Adults participate in show-and-tell, snack time, crafts, and other play activities. Preschool Mastermind’s founder says there are a range of reasons adults attend, but for the most part, they are there “just to have fun” (Shaw, 2015). Camp Grounded costs \$725 for 3-night summer camp experience; Preschool Mastermind charges between \$333 and \$999 per class. Adults are clearly willing to pay a lot of money for the chance to play like kids again.

2015 also saw a rise in popularity for adult exhibits in museums and galleries. British design studio, Pearlfisher created JUMP IN!, a ball pit as an art installation in London. The exhibit's marketing focused on the importance of play, saying, "When was the last time you played? Studies have shown that play can bring about extraordinary results for creative thinking" (Pearlfisher, 2016). The exhibit's play time slots quickly booked up, with Pearlfisher stating "The fact that we've been inundated with requests shows there's a real desire and need for [play] in our daily lives" (Pearlfisher, 2016).

Closer to home, UW's Henry Art Gallery recently drew "crowds of visitors" when they featured Martin Creed's balloon installation, *Work No. 360 (half the air in a given space)* (Lambert, 2015). Creed challenged visitors to "reencounter play as a kind of viscerally felt negotiation of boundaries, emotions, and interpersonal recognition" while they navigated the room half-filled with balloons (Sussman, 2015).

That same year, Belgian artist Carsten Höller filled London's Hayward Gallery with interactive installation pieces with a "wonderful, mischievous playfulness" to them, including slides and flying machines (De Zeen, 2015). Visitors were encouraged to use the slides to access the gallery exhibits and play with the other installation components.

The American Association of Museums, *Museum Magazine 2015 Award Issue* featured several exhibits in their "What's NEW" section, including the *ArtGames 2.0* app, which allows users to "play" with paintings in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's collection ("What's New," 2015, p. 14). AAM's MUSE Awards first place in digital communications was awarded to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's *#PlayArtfully* interactive digital experience ("MUSE Awards," 2015, p. 23). in which SFMOMA challenged their visitors to "Discover art in the everyday world around you by playing our tiny games! Look for them in surprising places online and around the city. Join in, share with friends, and post your experiences online using *#PlayArtfully*" ("Play Artfully," 2015). Museums in general have been slow to incorporate play into their programming. However these recent examples of play in museums coupled with an influx of adult-only play events at children's museums suggests play is coming to the forefront of museum programming.

Adult Play in (Children's) Museums

The organization structure of children's museums has another benefit for adult learners. Adults are free-choice learners; and choice and control are "at the heart of" free-choice learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 85). And no "group of museums better embodies the celebration of choice and control than children's museums" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 185). Their reputation as safe spaces to play,

their emphasis on interactivity and fun, their free-choice learning style, and their pre-existing exhibits make children's museums primed to offer adult visitors the same play experiences they currently offer their younger visitors.

Our cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills are "intricately intertwined. Play benefits each of these skills in direct and indirect ways" (White, 2012). Play can be expressed in a number of forms; "Regardless of the form, play in museums must present an open and interactive style allowing for ambiguity and freedom from evaluation" (White, 2012). Museums are "a place for learning" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 113). In general, learning requires "a combination of emotional, physical, and mental action; it also requires an appropriate context within which to express itself," (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 33) as humans are most motivated to learn "when they are in supportive environments" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 32).

Children's museums in particular provide a safe, judgment-free environment where play is more than okay – it is actively encouraged – and visitors of all types can participate in the play/learning continuum.

With an infrastructure to support play and the growing evidence that adults want to play, some children's museums have begun to have adult-only play events at their facilities to allow adult visitors to interact with their exhibits *sans* children. Nationwide, children's museums are beginning to offer "Adult Swim" recurring events ("from the public pool tradition of kicking the kids out so adults can have the

space to themselves") (Madison Children's', 2016) to one-off opportunities for adult-only programming. "If you want your adult patrons to learn, create a space for fun," (Barbakoff, 2014) and these museums are doing just that.

The Madison Children's Museum offers regular adult-only play events, with their monthly Adult Swim program: "More than 500 "grownups" routinely attend these 21-and-up events for the opportunity to play for the evening—crawling, sliding, and dancing their way through the museum" (Barbakoff, 2014). Another successful monthly program is the Carnegie Science Museum's "21+ Nights," which also advertise as opportunities for adults to play in the children's museum. These events have grown rapidly, and "average about 1,000 [adult visitors] per event" (The Tribune Review, 2014).

The Hands On Children's Museum in Olympia, Washington also hosts Adult Swim events. While their events include live music, food and drink, and other activities, they still advertise the experience specifically as an opportunity for adults to "play your way through the museum" (Hand's On, 2016). The Grand Rapids Children's Museum specializes their adult-only play-event marketing by targeting corporations that want to "play helps team-building, reduces stress and improves creative thinking!" (Grand Rapids, 2016).

What's Good for the Goose is Good for the Gander

"Museums are becoming more open to and involved with interactive and playful approaches to engaging visitors" (Grenier, 2010, p. 82). Which is excellent news for museums, according to John Falk, as he says that to be successful, museums must "make experiences enjoyable and entertaining; fun and learning are not mutually exclusive. Doing so is not only possible but essential to quality museum experience" (Falk, 2000). "For adults, just as for children, fun and play are crucial components of learning. By creating programs that center on play, and by adding elements of play into existing programs, [informal learning environments] can engage adults of all ages" (Barbakoff, 2014).

Play is good for museums' adult visitors, and it benefits museums as well. A recent study by a museum analytics firm surveyed over 29,000 museum visitors. They found that visitors who "shared a hands-on experience [...] were significantly more likely to feel that they had learned something, and over *five times* more likely to mention that the experience was fun" (Wilkening, 2015, p. 29). The findings of this study "reinforce the immense value [...] for providing positive learning outcomes in a fun and engaging way" (Wilkening, 2015, p. 29). Visitors are much more likely to remember a fun, playful experience, and positively associate that memory with that museum. If museums effect visitors to see that "museums are a playful, safe, open, and friendly environment for learning, they will invite a friendly

response from visitors" (Grenier, 2010, p. 83). This "friendly response" can translate to increased membership, repeat visits, and advocacy.

While the literature review shows that play benefits adult museum visitors and that adults seek out play opportunities, it also shows that museums are only recently responding to that data. Adult-only play opportunities in museums are still rare, and museums in general are unsure how to encourage their adult visitors to play. The existing research is lacking in terms of showing what adult play opportunities look like, how adult visitors respond to these opportunities, what are the museum's benefits and challenges when hosting these events, and if these events are successful. My research seeks to address these questions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose Statement and Research Goals

The purpose of this research is to examine adult-only play events at children's museums to understand these programs' potential benefits to museums and their adult audiences. The goal is to identify the potential benefits of play for adult museum visitors, and how museums can and do incorporate play opportunities for this audience. As the seemingly primary type of museum supporting adult play, children's museums will be the primary focus of the sampling research. For the sake of this research, it was necessary to make a judgment call about whether an adult museum visitor was engaged in play. By focusing on events that used the word "play" in their titles or descriptions, it can be reasonably assumed that an attending adult considered the activities they engaged in as play, and sought them out this purpose.

Methods

This research was conducted with interviews via phone. The format for the interview (introduction, questions, conclusion) was informed by the guidelines provided in *Research Design, 4th Edition* by John W. Creswell. The study is qualitative in nature, with interviews as the method.

Research Sites and Sampling Protocol

The museums studied were chosen based on several factors. All of the organizations contacted as potential research sites are members of the Association Children's Museums, which establishes standards of professional practice for children's museums worldwide. The museums examined are all located within the continental United States, both for ease of research and for maximum relevancy to the domestic field. The museums were selected based on a diverse geographical spread to gain a broad data sample. To further narrow which programs would be considered, I generated a list of criteria the museums must meet.

1. The museum must specifically advertise their event as "adults only";
2. The museum must stress the importance of play in their advertising;
3. The event admission price must be similar to the museum's general admission price.

Potential interview sites were identified via a Google search. Sites with adult-only play events were searched for with three different sets of terms: "adult play event children's museum", "adult only children's museum", and "adult play children's museum" to capture a variety of potential sites. The first thirty results of each search are shown in the tables below, listing the most frequently returned sites by number of unique entries.

Figure 1: Google search results of “adult play event children’s museum”

Google result site name	Number of results for site of 30
Children’s Museum of Phoenix	6
Boston Children’s Museum	3
Madison Children’s Museum	3
Hands On Children’s Museum	2
Providence Children’s Museum	2
Museum with only one result*	9
Result was not an event/museum	5

* Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, Lincoln Children’s Museum, Grand Rapid’s Children’s Museum, Chicago Children’s Museum, Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota, Mid-Michigan Children’s Museum, Chicago Children’s Museum, Minnesota Children’s Museum, Children’s Museum of Denver

Figure 2: Google search results of “adult only children’s museum”

Google result site name	Number of results for site of 30
Boston Children’s Museum	8
Madison Children’s Museum	4
Children’s Museum of Indianapolis	4
Lincoln Children’s Museum	2
Children’s Museum of Phoenix	2
Museum with only one result*	5
Result was not an event/museum	5

* Children’s Museum of the Upstate, Grand Rapids Children’s Museum, Children’s Museum of Winnipeg, Children’s Museum of Pittsburg, Children’s Museum of Winston-Salem

Figure 3: Google search results of “adult play children’s museum”

Google result site name	Number of results for site of 30
Children’s Museum of Phoenix	6
Providence Children’s Museum	2
Museum with only one result*	9
Result was not an event/museum	13

* Hands On Children’s Museum, Minnesota Children’s Museum, Children’s Museum of the Upstate, Boston Children’s Museum, Grand Rapids Children’s Museum, Habitot [sic] Children’s Museum, Madison Children’s Museum, Kohl Children’s Museum, Children’s Museum of Green Bay

Five of the most-frequently returned sites were identified and contacted (via the address email listed on the adult-only play event program page or advertisement) to request an interview. The museums contacted were:

1. Providence Children’s Museum (Providence, Rhode Island): “Play On!”;
2. Boston Children’s Museum (Boston, Massachusetts): “Boston Grown Up’s Museum”;
3. Madison Children’s Museum (Madison, Wisconsin): “Adult Swim”;
4. Hands On Children’s Museum (Olympia, Washington): “Adult Swim”;
5. Children’s Museum of Phoenix (Phoenix, Arizona): “Play Date”.

Of the five museums contacted, four responded within the timeframe and to email inquiries and three were willing to be interviewed. The three sites interviewed

were: Madison Children's Museum, Hands On Children's Museum, and Children's Museum of Phoenix.

Interview Candidates

The interviewee at each site was the staff member in charge of the event. The interviewee's title was different at each site, depending on which department oversees their adult-only play events. Of the three sites interviewed, the interviewees were: Kia Karlen, Education Director: Madison Children's Museum, Alex Wurth, Special Events Manager: Children's Museum of Phoenix, and Adrienne Testa, Visitor Engagement Coordinator: Hands On Children's Museum.

The Instrument

The focus of the research questions were open-ended interview questions discussing how the staff feel about their events and impact. Additionally, there were some quantitative questions asking for attendance and revenue data. A copy of the instrument can be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Summary of Data Collected

Following the research purpose statement, the data collected can be organized in two broad categories: quantitative/qualitative information about hosting the events, and the quantitative/qualitative outcomes resulting from hosting the events. For ease of comparison across institutions, the results are displayed in groups by question or result.

The quantitative questions examine the particulars of each event. These questions seek to assist the field and by aggregating statistical data on adult-only play events at children's museums. This data can help other institutions generalize staff to attendance ratios, prices, and frequency, as well as support (or refute) qualitative claims of event success or community receptivity.

The qualitative questions seek to understand if and how adult only play events benefit adult visitors, children's museums, and the museum field from the perspective of these museum professionals. Relevant questions and answers are listed below. Direct quotes from interviewees are in quotation marks.

Figure 1: Quantitative Event Information

	Madison Children's Museum "Adult Swim"	Children's Museum of Phoenix "Play Date"	Hands On Children's Museum "Adult Swim"
A. Hosting events since	2011	2012	2014
B. Recent event attendance	500-600	800	650
C. Event capacity	700	800	650
D. Approximate staff per event	35	25	35
E. Admission cost	\$15 basic/\$40 VIP	\$15 pre/\$20 door	\$20-\$25
F. Frequency of events	8 times per year	4 times per year	4 times per year
G. Event time	6:00PM-10:00PM	7:00PM-11:00PM	7:00PM-10:00PM
H. Potential revenue (C x min. E)	\$10,500	\$12,000	\$13,000

Figure 2: Quantitative Visitor Demographics

	Madison Children's Museum "Adult Swim"	Children's Museum of Phoenix "Play Date"	Hands On Children's Museum "Adult Swim"
I. Average visitor age	21-35 is the typical age range; also see 35-75	See all ages 18+, last event was 20-30	"Young professionals" and "empty nesters"
J. First-time or repeat visitors	Recurring audience and first-time visitors	First-time visitors with some repeat visitors	(no data)
K. Solo or group attendance	Majority are partner/group; some solo	(no data)	(no data)

Qualitative Event Data

While there are differences across the events, major themes emerged regarding positive visitor reaction and audience building, evidence of adult play, benefits to adult visitors, and benefits to museums.

Positive Visitor Reaction and Audience Building

All three museums report a very positive adult visitor reaction to adult-only play events. Additionally, these adult-only play events appear to be broadening each museums' typical audience. Their qualitative reports of high attendance rates, visitor demographics, and survey results support this.

At Madison Children's Museum, the museum began hosting Adult Swim events in 2011 as an "experiment" in reaction to staff members' childless friends expressing a desire to visit the museum. Their first event had 300 visitors, and Karlen reports it was "eye opening" to see how many adults wanted the opportunity to play in a children's museum without children visitors present. Since their first adult-only event, event attendance continue to increase, and some of those visitors have become regular museum visitors. Says Karlen: "We have had our first cycles of couples attending Adult Swim while dating, holding their weddings at the museum, then eventually returning when they have children."

The Children's Museum of Phoenix reports event success as well. Their adult-only play events started in 2012, and now regularly sell out of tickets. Their events see a "mixture of guests," including both first-time attendees and repeat visitors. The Hands On Children's Museum similarly regularly sells out of tickets, and is attracting a broader audience than their typical audience. Their adult-only play events are attracting both "young professionals" and "empty nesters," not parents who also come to the museum with children during museum hours.

All three museums report attracting visitors who don't themselves have children, thus broadening their audience. A new audience can mean potential new sources of income, increased community support and advocacy, and a further reach of the museum's mission.

Evidence of Adult Play

All three museums report evidence of adult play at these events. Additionally, all three museums feel that play is important to and beneficial for adults.

At Madison Children's Museum, Karlen reports that even though the museum expected adult visitors at adult-only play events to interact with certain exhibits (i.e.: "climber and wheel"), they were "surprised with how

much time people spent in art crafts, playing with the costumes and capes, in the reading pods, and playing with puppets." Further, the visitors spend a lot of time making things and using their hands in the craft and maker areas. The group atmosphere helps promote play, as it "gives (adults) permission to play (when) they're around a lot of other people doing that. The critical mass of people helps them feel okay playing."

The events at the Children's Museum of Phoenix show evidence of adult play as well. Their museum has three floors of exhibits, activities, and play areas, and Wurth states "Anything that the kids are doing during the day, we have open" for adults at Play Date. The event and museum supports an atmosphere of play, which promotes playful socialization and interaction. At the Hands On Children's Museum, Testa reports their adult visitors are "playing alongside peers, trying new things...that's really valuable."

Benefits to Adult Visitors

Testa's statement of adult play having value is supported by literature and researchers. Karlen agrees, and her thoughts on adult play echo Tartakovsky, Keller, Brown, and other researchers; "Play isn't something you only need when you're young, you need life-long experiences." Testa also agrees with Tartakovsky, pointing out that "Play is stress-relieving." The adult-

only play events at children's museums provide adult visitors with life-long play experiences, also potentially reducing their stress.

Further, when it comes to collaborative play and group experiences, Karlen states "Adults crave that kind of social interaction." She points to the recent societal trend of adult play as example: "You can see this in the pop-up popularity of paint bars and escape houses. People are looking for experiences as a group, even if they don't know the group." Children's museums naturally foster social interactions by design. To work many exhibits, you "need a buddy or a partner," as Karlen points out. That forces you to talk to new people and work together to experience an exhibit. Of their adult-only play events, Wurth says "It's a good opportunity for people to socialize and interact with strangers too in a fun way." Testa agrees, stating that the events are a good way to play alongside peers and try new things. These events provide an opportunity for adults to play together in a judgment-free environment.

Part of the learning process, for adults and children alike, is to "play" with ideas and concepts. At a children's museum, adult visitors can ask "'How DOES a plane fly? Why DON'T ships sink? What are keystones anyway?' in a nonjudgmental, non-teaching, non-embarrassing way without their kids there to see" (C. Bitter, personal communication, April 21, 2016). Another

benefit to adult visitors is the direct learning component that Testa has witnessed as a result of their events. Her museum's events have scientists present in the exhibits to answer questions and help teach adults while they play and interact. They have found that adults are very willing to ask scientists questions that help them learn the basics. These events directly foster these inquiries: "If (the adults) were outside a place that wasn't as playful, they wouldn't feel inhibited enough to ask."

These interviews support that adult play has value, and these specific events show evidence of adult play. Additionally, staff seem to agree that adult visitors want opportunities to play. From this, it appears clear that opportunities for adult play are considered important by museum staff, desired by adult visitors, and that the adult-only events at these children's museums are successful at providing such opportunities.

Benefits to Museums

Findings from the interviews support the assumptions made at the end of the literature review section: that if museums provide a "playful, safe, open and friendly environment for learning, they will invite a friendly response from visitors," evidenced by increased visitorship and revenue, and greater value in the community (Grenier, 2010, p. 83).

Each museum interviewed has seen an increase in their visitorship. As many children's museums require all adult visitors to be accompanied by a child, adult-only events are an access points for adults without children. Two of the three sites reported that they see new visitors at every event, showing that these events continue to broaden their museum's audience (the third site did not have this data available at the time of interview). Karlen's statement that some of their adult-only visitors have since returned during business hours with their own children illustrates how the events are creating a continuum of attendance and support and creating a new generation of visitors.

While the events increase visitorship, they also appear help to strengthen bonds with some existing members. Says Testa: "Adults don't see this place as being for them when they're with kids, but they can see it at these events. That makes it feel like (the museum is) for them." Similarly, the Hands On Children's Museum is finding adult-only event visitors are better play partners (rather than idle chaperones) for their children: "When they come back with kids, they're more enthusiastic. It's a space now where an adult plays alongside a child." It appears that adult-only play events have the

potential to attract new adult-only visitors *and* improve the experience of adult visitors with children.

Each of the three sites report revenue from these events. Karlen states that Adult Swim events are her museum's biggest source of earned program revenue. For each, a sold-out event at their lowest ticket price grosses over \$10,000 for a maximum four-hour event. The infrastructure and materials to support play are already present at each site: staffing appears to be the biggest cost to host an adult-only play event. (For example, 35 staff members making \$20.00 per hour for four hours totals \$2,800.)

These events also have the potential to attract other types of income. Testa reports that some event attendees have since become donors or volunteers. Karlen's museum has also seen an increase in volunteers, specifically from tech company teams who want to volunteer during the adult-only play events. Wurth's museum has seen in-kind donations, with artists donating their time and volunteering their experience at stations during their adult-only events.

Of children's museums, Karlen states that "as a field, we are trying to assert the notion of a children's museum as a broader community asset." These events appear to give each museum a greater significance in the community: in providing adult-only events, these children's museums benefit

a wider audience, which in turn stimulates a wider interest in their institution. Children's museums are "players in the cultural landscape," she says, and "big economic drivers in the community." These adult-only play events are bringing in a new, bigger audience, are generating revenue, and finding ways to be relevant to a broad visitorship. Karlen feels a museum's presence additionally helps shape a community's education policy, and provides community recreation space.

Wurth also talks specifically about how a community benefits with the success of their children's museum's adult-only play events. Their adult-only events are something that "bring people to downtown Phoenix," and has contributed positively to their downtown's growth over the past five years.

Testa brings the positive community impact back around to directly benefiting the museums. Successful events, and being an institution for a broad audience causes "people fall in love with the museum, and that's what leads to the whole community being involved with the museum." It's a positive feedback loop: community support keeps a museum thriving, which allows it to continue to serve that community, which increases community support, ad infinitum.

It is interesting to note that two of the three sites reported their staff as recently presenting to the wider field on the importance of play. At the

Children's Museum of Phoenix, their childhood specialist recently presented on the "importance of play and different types of play, and how we play and interact with children." In partnership the Children's Museum of Phoenix, Karlen of Madison Children's Museum presented at the National Association of Children's Museum Conference on their adult-only play events.

Additionally, Karlen will present at the Association of Science and Technology Centers conference in September, 2016 on different ways children's museums can include an adult perspective. It appears there is industry interest in adult play and how children's museums can play a role in leading that interest.

Limitations to Generalizing Research

While these three children's museums show similar success (revenue, attendance) with their events, its important to not overly generalize the data collected. This is a small sample size, and it's possible their similar success rates are coincidence and not indicative of the success other institutions would have implementing adult-only play events.

Another potential limitation to the data collected is the relatively new phenomenon of adult-only play events at children's museums. Each site interviewed shows an increase in attendance over time, however each

program is less than five years old. It is possible that the events will have a short-lived window of popularity and attendance will decline in subsequent years.

It is important to note that the results are from the perspective of the museum professionals interviewed and do not necessarily represent the event participator perspective. Additionally, the interviewees may have felt personal or professional pressure to represent their program or museum in the best possible light, which could result in a positive result skew. The interviewees were allowed to review their interviews and clarify/omit information before inclusion in this research paper. Anonymity was not promised nor provided.

This data has been collected from American children's museums, serving a largely domestic audience. It is possible that this data and the success of these events may not translate internationally.

The museums contacted for interview are museums that appeared within the first 10 pages of a Google search: it is unlikely that any museum that tried these events and were unsuccessful would be among the first returns for a search. That could contribute to an unintentional bias whereby only successful events were interviewed because only successful events were returned in a search, which would skew the results positive. It is possible that

the staff interviewed felt personal or institutional pressure to report only positive aspects of the events as well.

Of the three museums, the Children's Museum of Phoenix is located in Phoenix, Arizona, with a huge population: 1,445,632 citizens (2010 US Census). While some people might argue this contributes to the event's successful attendance rate, it's important to note that Madison Children's Museum's is in Madison, Wisconsin, which has 243,344 citizens (2010 US Census), and the Hand's On Children's Museum is in Olympia, Washington, which has only 46,478 citizens (2010 US Census), and both report successful outcomes.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this research is to examine adult-only play events at children's museums to understand these programs' potential benefits to museums and their adult audiences. Literature shows that play is important to adults; play contributes positively to adults in terms of learning, relaxation, and relationships; and that museums are well-placed to provide play experiences for adult visitors. Research shows that children's museums are beginning to provide adult-only play opportunities for adult visitors, with a great deal of success.

In addition to a review of available literature, I interviewed key staff at three American children's museums regarding the implementation, efficacy, and importance of adult-only play events. The mixed-method interview instrument was guided by *Research Design, 4th Edition* by John W. Creswell and included both quantitative and qualitative questions. Through the interviews, the museums reported these events have positive outcomes for their visitors, for their own museums, and for the community at large.

For the visitors, adult-only play events provide an opportunity for adults to play, which can increase learning, decrease stress, and strengthen social bonds. For the museums, adult-only play events contribute to a wider

audience, generate revenue, increase a museum's perceived and actual value to its community, and spark industry dialogue about the different ways a children's museum can serve diverse audiences. Adult-only play events were reported to allow the museum to become a cultural institution that more people feel like are "for them." Additionally, adult-only play events contribute to adult visitors becoming better play facilitators for children.

Recommendations

It appears that the difficulties in producing adult-only play events at children's museums (staffing being the biggest obstacle reported) are far outweighed by the benefits to the museum and its visitors. Many of the activities and exhibits that adult visitors are drawn to at children's museums can be found in typically "family-oriented" museums like science centers and zoos. These all-ages museums may also benefit from allowing time for just adult visitors to play with their exhibits and experience their programming. Museums in general may find benefit in hosting after-hours adult-only events even if their primary audience already is adults: a change in time and atmosphere may attract to a new audience and provide a different access point.

Further, the museum field would benefit from both broader and deeper research on adult-only play events at children's museums. Data from a greater number of sites will more accurately show whether these events are "successful," and if they are indeed something other museums should consider hosting. Further research on adult play would potentially support the importance of play for adults, which would increase the perceived legitimacy of adult-only play events.

Over the course of this research, I have become a firm believer in the myriad benefits of adult play, and encourage all adult readers to make time and space in their own lives for play and joyful activities. Remember that there is merit in play, even if it seems purposeless: play makes us smarter, more relaxed, more empathetic, and happier.

Conclusion

Adult-only play events at children's museums benefit visitors, museums, and communities: they contribute to the health of individuals and institutions both. The findings of this research (the positive response visitors have to these events and the positive outcomes museums see as a result) will help inform the interview sites as well as museums in general as they consider implementing adult-only play events in their own institutions.

WORKS CITED

- Amazon. "Best Seller List." accessed February, 2016.
http://www.amazon.com/best-sellers-books-Amazon/zgbs/books/ref=pd_dp_ts_b_1
- Association of Children's Museums. "About." Accessed January 24, 2016.
<http://www.childrensmuseums.org/childrens-museums/about-childrens-museums>
- Barbakoff, Audrey. "Learning Through Play in Adult Programs." *RA News*. August, 2014. <https://www.ebscohost.com/novelist/novelist-special/learning-through-play-in-adult-programs>
- Brown, Dr. Stuart. *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. New York: Penguin, 2009.
- Camp Grounded. "About." <http://campgrounded.org>
- "Carsten Holler transforms London's South Bank into a playground." *De Zeen* magazine. June 9, 2015.
<http://www.dezeen.com/2015/06/09/carsten-holler-decision-london-south-bank-hayward-gallery-playground-slides/>
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th Edition)*. California: SAGE Publications, 2014.
- Diamond, Judy. "Playing and Learning." The Association of Science Technology Centers. Accessed November 8, 2015.
http://www.astc.org/resource/education/learning_diamond.htm
- Downey, Stephanie Amanda Krantz, and Emiili Skidmore. "The Parental Role in Children's Museums." In *Museums and Social Issues*, Volume 5, Number 1, 15-34. Left Coast Press, 2010.
http://www.randikorn.com/docs/Parental_Role_Children_Museums.pdf
- Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. California: Alta Mira, 2000.
- Grand Rapids Children's Museum. "Corporate Recess." Accessed February 15, 2016. <http://www.grcm.org/#!/corporaterecess/c8oz>
- Gray, Peter. "The Value of Play II: How Play Promotes Reasoning." *Psychology Today*. December 4, 2008.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/200812/the-value-play-ii-how-play-promotes-reasoning>
- Lambert, Ken. "37,000-balloon exhibit draws crowds to Henry Art Gallery." *The Seattle Times*. September 27, 2015.
<http://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/visual-arts/37000-balloon-exhibit-draws-crowds-to-henry-art-gallery/>

- Grenier, Robin S. "All Work and No Play Make for a Dull Museum Visitor." In *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. 77-85. New Jersey: Wiley Periodicals, 2010.
- Hands on Children's Museum "Adult Swim," accessed February 15, 2016.
<http://www.hocm.org/adultswim/>
- Karlen, Kia. Personal interview. April 5, 2016.
- Keller, Jared. "The Psychological Case for Adult Play Time." *Pacific Standard Magazine*. April 9, 2015. <http://www.psmag.com/health-and-behavior/throw-out-your-computer-and-grab-some-legos>
- Madison Children's Museum. "Adult Swim." accessed February 15, 2016.
<http://madisonchildrensmuseum.org/programs-and-events/adult-swim/>
- MUSE Award. *Museum Magazine*. November/December 2015, 23.
- Night at the Museums," *The Tribune Review*, September 24, 2014,
<http://triblive.com/aande/museums/6772889-74/says-library-art#axzz3oTNsC300>
- Pearlfisher. "JUMP IN!" Accessed February 7, 2016.
<http://www.pearlfisher.com/live/news/jump-in/>.
- Piaget, Jean. *Play, Dreams And Imitation In Childhood*. Translated by C. Gattegno and F. M. Hodgson. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1951.
- Piaget, Jean. *Play, Dreams and Imitation*. Jordan B. Peterson online edition. Accessed January 25, 2016.
<http://jordanbpeterson.com/Psy230H/docs/2014/03Piaget.pdf>
- "Play Artfully." San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Accessed February 15, 2015. http://archv.sfmoma.org/exhib_events/playartfully
- Quartz. "The explosive rise of adult coloring books, charted." March 11, 2016.
<http://qz.com/637238/the-explosive-rise-of-adult-coloring-books-charted/>
- Roberts, Justine, Terah Gonzalez, Lauren Mercer, and Marjorie Schwarzer. "Emerging Trends in Children's Museums: A Survey of the Association of Children's Museums Membership, 2008-2009." Gyroscope Inc. and John F. Kennedy University, 2010.
<http://www.gyroscopeinc.com/articles/EmergingTrendsSurveyReports.m.pdf>
- Shaw Brown, Genevieve. "Grownups Pay Big Bucks to Attend NYC 'Adult Preschool'." ABC News. March 17, 2015.
<http://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/grownups-pay-big-bucks-attend-nyc-adult-preschool/story?id=29701836>.
- "Standards for Professional Practice in Children's Museums." The Association

- of Children's Museums, 2012.
[http://www.childrensmuseums.org/images/Library/Standards for Professional Practice in Childrens Museums.pdf](http://www.childrensmuseums.org/images/Library/Standards%20for%20Professional%20Practice%20in%20Childrens%20Museums.pdf)
- Sussuman, Matt. "Martin Creed: Work No. 360 at the Henry Art Gallery." *Dailyserving* online publication. September 22, 2015.
<http://dailyserving.com/2015/09/martin-creed-work-no-360-at-the-henry-art-gallery/>
- Tartakovsky, Margarita. "The Importance of Play for Adults," *World of Psychology blog*.
<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2012/11/15/the-importance-of-play-for-adults/>
- Testa, Adrienne. Personal interview. April 18, 2016.
- Umopathy, Kiran. "Adult Coloring Books Capitalize on Play Trends." *PSFK blog*.
<http://www.psfk.com/2015/04/adult-coloring-books-play-trends-johanna-basford-secret-garden.html>
- Ward-Wimmer, Dottie. "Introduction: The Healing Potential of Adults at Play." In *Play Therapy With Adults*. 1-9. New Jersey: Wiley Periodicals, 2003.
- "What's New." *Museum Magazine*. November/December, 2015.
- White, Dr. Rachel E. "The Power of Play: A Research Summary on Play and Learning." Research summary, Minnesota Children's Museum, 2012.
<https://www.mcm.org/uploads/MCMResearchSummary.pdf>.
- Wilkening, Susie. "Beginning to Measure Meaning Making in Museum Experiences." *Dimensions Magazine*. May/June, 2015.
- Wurth, Alex. Personal interview. April 12, 2016.

APPENDIX A: INSTRUMENT

What is your role in the adult-only play opportunities your museum provides (staff, education, marketing, etc.)?

Next I would like to talk about the adult-only play opportunities at your museum.

What types of adult-only events does your museum offer, and how often do they occur?

How long has your museum been doing adult-only play events?

Why does your museum host these events? Are these events meeting a public demand, or are they being initiated by the museums?

Who is coming to these events?

How are the events being marketed?

Now I would like to talk about the outcomes of these events.

What are the stated goals of these events? Do the facilitators (educators or marketers) feel these events are successful (based on their stated goals)?

Have there been quantifiable benefits to this program, in terms of revenue, visitorship, etc.?

What is the attendance cost for these events?

What is the typical attendance?

Is the program self-sustaining?

Have there been formal evaluations done by museum staff on the efficacy of adult play nights?

Finally, I would like to ask your opinion on a few topics.

What are the biggest hurdles your museum had to overcome to implement this program?

How do you think your visitors benefit from these programs?

How do you think the industry benefits from producing these programs?

What is your role in the adult-only play opportunities your museum provides (staff, education, marketing, etc.)?

Next I would like to talk about the adult-only play opportunities at your museum.

What types of adult-only events does your museum offer, and how often do they occur?

How long has your museum been doing adult-only play events?

Why does your museum host these events? Are these events meeting a public demand, or are they being initiated by the museums?

Who is coming to these events?

How are the events being marketed?

Now I would like to talk about the outcomes of these events.

What are the stated goals of these events? Do the facilitators (educators or marketers) feel these events are successful (based on their stated goals)?

Have there been quantifiable benefits to this program, in terms of revenue, visitorship, etc.?

What is the attendance cost for these events?

What is the typical attendance?

Is the program self-sustaining?

Have there been formal evaluations done by museum staff on the efficacy of adult play nights?

Finally, I would like to ask your opinion on a few topics.

What are the biggest hurdles your museum had to overcome to implement this program?

How do you think your visitors benefit from these programs?

How do you think the industry benefits from producing these programs?