

MUSEUM EDUCATION CASE STUDY: THE BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA'S ANTIQUITIES MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT

Museum education is one of the important roles of museums. There are different aspects through which museums can support education such as special guided tours, educational programs, etc. It is obvious that history, culture as well as art education is agreed to be one of the main duties of the antiquities museums, where they try to provide a continuation of school and university education with a place for study and appreciation of all these fields.

With its ancient and great history, Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) is considered as one of the most known libraries in the world; it influences cultural as well as touristic life in Egypt and other countries. Being the key expertise, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina's Antiquities Museum is considered as a valuable case study to investigate its impact on the cultural life as well as tourism.

In order to explore the possibilities and effectiveness of museum education a comparative study has been undertaken between the Bibliotheca Alexandrina's Antiquities Museum and other museums; the National Museum in Alexandria and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago.

Recommendations include increasing marketing efforts concerning the museum education programs and extending the age of participants to include elder people and various categories of visitors.

Keywords: Museum education-Bibliotheca Alexandrina-cultural tourism

INTRODUCTION

The number of tourists seeking to discover the past is constantly growing. More and more people are interested in heritage and cultural tourism (Prideaux & Kininmont, 1999). "The growth in tourism is intrinsically linked to a parallel growth in museums and cultural attractions of all kinds" (Lord, 1999).

"Museums are first and foremost educational and scholarly institutions in the broadest sense" (Ambrose, 1993). They are not simply places to display historical artifacts; they are more complex institutions that play interdependent roles. Their collections and associated information can be used for educational purposes for people of all ages. They may also affiliate research, serve as cultural centers and even provide entertainment (Mottner & Ford, 2005).

Every museum should implement its educational policy and market itself effectively to schools as the provision of an education service will help to build support and understanding for the museum's work among them (Ambrose, 1993).

Communities are no longer recipients of culture; they have to play a key part in the understanding of their heritage. On the other hand, museums' collections need interpretation in order to allow visitors to interact with them. This interaction is provided by museum educational programs which allow people to see, touch, and hear, and which attract and develop the interests of public categories with different intellectual and physical needs. Therefore, the staff responsible for the

accomplishment of this role must involve museologists and educators who have a good understanding of educational theory and practice (Moffat & Wollard, 2004; Talboys, 2005).

In addition, museum education programs can be used as an effective marketing tool to increase visitor numbers and capture a greater share of the tourist market.

RESEARCH AIM

1. To realize that museum education is one of the most important roles of museums.
2. To explore museum education at Bibliotheca Alexandrina and compare it with other national and international museums.
3. To explore strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of BA's museum educational programs.
4. To put guidelines how to improve the BA's museum educational programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted with the descriptive-evaluative method. This method is usually used to observe an object condition of a system and is considered useful when making predictions and implementations. In addition, the comparative method was considered valuable to investigate Alexandria's museum education for two aspects:

1. It throws light on the present situation and future trends.
2. It suggests possible solutions to the current problems.

The research was not able to rely upon the web sites of either the BA antiquities museum or Alexandria National Museum. The BA's web site does not have a direct link and very little information about its antiquities museum education programs, while the Alexandria National Museum's web site is still under construction. Therefore, in order to know and understand the concepts and achievements in

museum education, museum staff such as directors as well as participants had been interviewed in these museums.

However, the education programs of both the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago were discussed through investigating their advanced web site.

Finally, a SWOT analysis was conducted on BA's antiquities museum's education program. It was valuable to look at the strengths and weaknesses of current service, also at the opportunities available and threats before providing guidelines and recommendations.

OVERVIEW OF MUSEUM EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN EGYPT

It is worth mentioning that the Egyptians were probably pioneers in recognizing this educational role of the museum as early as the 1880s. In 1882 the Egyptian Antiquities Organization opened a school attached to the museum at that time to teach ancient languages, scripts, art, history and monuments of Ancient Egypt. Also, in 1869 a private school was established to teach the Ancient Egyptian language. It was unfortunately closed later.

Throughout more than a whole century museums in Egypt were only considered places where objects were exhibited to people who did not really grasp their real significance. The major development occurred in the 1990s. The Hans Seidel Foundation held important activities in Egypt in 1994 which were in the form of special workshops carried out for children in the Luxor Museum. Special six-months training courses were organized for museum curators (October 1995 to march 1996). The first group of Egyptian museum educators graduated at the end of the second International conference on Museum Education held in Cairo in April 1996.

BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA

The new library of Alexandria, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, is considered as a landmark building standing in the city's historic eastern harbor. This was probably the location of the ancient library.

The Ancient Library

The ancient library of Alexandria is an example of higher education in African antiquity. It was one of the world's earliest known prototype universities. The construction of the library began in 283 B.C.E. under Ptolemy I Soter and was completed by his son Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Located near the royal palace in the Greek section of the city known as the **BRUCHEION**, it was intended to be a religious and secular institution. It was a great complex which included the **MUSEION**; the place where the Greek goddesses known as the Muses were worshipped. In fact, the modern term museum derives from this Greek word **MUSEION**.

Besides this **MUSEION**, the library comprised living quarters for the community of poets, philosophers and scholars. It also included lectures rooms, a botanical garden, a zoological park, astronomical observatory and above all, the great library which is said to have amassed over a half a million works on papyri rolls.

Hence, this ancient library was a multicultural institution that served as a symbol of the Ptolemys prestige, and also as a vehicle for cultural and intellectual domination of other cultures through appropriation of all written knowledge (Lulat, 2005).

The New Library

It opened in 2002 in an attempt to revive and recapture the spirit of the ancient Alexandria library. Its main mission was to be an essential center in the production and dissemination of knowledge, besides being a place of dialogue, learning and understanding between cultures and people.

Being a great Egyptian library with international dimensions, it has actually shelf space for more than eight million books and a huge reading room occupying place on eleven levels. It also includes a conference center, libraries for children and for the blind, four art galleries, and a planetarium, a museum of sciences, an exhibition of manuscripts, an exhibition of illustration and historical maps, and the antiquities museum. Accordingly, the new library is considered a source of specialized knowledge that emphasizes the social sciences, arts, and humanities (Murray, 2009).

THE MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES AT THE BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA

The idea of establishing a museum of antiquities in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was a result of the great historical value of the modern library's site.

During the excavations that took place at the site (1993-1995), traces of the ancient palace quarter were found. These included important mosaics, some of which representing unique subjects. Such findings shed the light on the necessity of housing a museum of antiquities within the cultural complex of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It is considered as one of the few museums, not only in Egypt but also in the whole world, in which artifacts are exhibited where they were excavated (Hawas, 2002).

In addition to these objects, others were collected from archaeological magazines all over Egypt. There are also underwater antiquities that were hauled up during recent explorations in the Mediterranean seabed near the eastern and western harbors of Alexandria.

In October 2002 the museum was officially inaugurated. It is housed in section B1 of the library complex and includes about 1079 objects which are displayed in a chronological order. The collections reflect the rich, multi-cultural history of Egypt with its Ancient Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic heritage, with special emphasis on Alexandria and the Hellenistic period. They consist of papyri, pottery, sculpture, portrait heads, etc.

It is worth mentioning that displaying the ancient artifacts within the modern structure provides the new library with the spirit of the past as a reminder of the glorious history of Alexandria. The great collections of the museum not only show the brilliance of the Egyptian artist, but also reflect the ancient Egyptian heritage particularly during the period when Alexandria reached its zenith (Hawas, 2002).

On the other hand, the mission of the Museum is not only to give its visitors a glimpse of the different eras of Egypt's history, but also to raise the cultural awareness of young people by presenting a variety of educational programs.

Comparison between museum education at Bibliotheca Alexandrina's Antiquities Museum and other museums: National Museum in Alexandria, Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Oriental Institute's Museum in Chicago

1. Museum Education at Bibliotheca Alexandrina's Antiquities Museum (Plate I)

The Antiquities Museum at BA offers its visitors to learn about Egyptian civilization and the masterpieces discovered at the site of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the treasures salvaged from the Mediterranean as well as other objects displayed at the Museum. In an effort to expand knowledge and awareness about the different periods of Egyptian history, the Antiquities Museum is organizing education programs and workshops for children and teenagers.

Participated children's age vary between 9 and 17. The education program usually takes place during the summer and mid-year school vacation. This program is available during the whole week except Fridays and Saturdays.

At the end of each yearly program a ceremony is made including an exhibition of the children handcrafts.

The museum's education program has started at Bibliotheca Alexandrina since 2003. At the beginning all children were accepted without any conditions. However, it was noticeable that some children lacked the talent and ability to respond positively during the various activities.

As a result, since 2005, children had to succeed in an advanced technical test in order to be accepted in the museum education program.

Children will, then, be divided into groups according to their ages. Each group is offered different attending days as follows:

15-17 years: 2days/week.

10-14 years: 2days/week.

9 years: one day/week.

The number of participants though still very limited (only 20), it has grown over the years (at the beginning the number of participants varied only 10-12). This might be due to the weak marketing efforts. For example, according to the educator, they have tried only once to announce about their education program at schools. In addition, the library's web site doesn't give enough and eye catching information about its education programs. There is no direct link to museum education programs on the BA's web site; one can only get connected to it when typing '**MUSEUM EDUCATION PROGRAM**' at the search engine.

Interviewing participants and staff

- When participants were asked how they knew about this program, most of them were informed by a friend or through an advert they incidentally saw when visiting the library. None of them were informed through the BA's web site.
- Most of the participants stated that they participated at the BA's museum education program in order to increase their knowledge about Egyptian history and archeology and also to develop their art talent.
- They all explained how useful it was for them to participate in the various art workshops and history and archeological lectures at this program and that it met their expectations. They liked the team work atmosphere a lot.
- Each Participant convinced some of his friends or members of his family to participate in the BA's museum education program as well.

- Most of them kept participating in this program every year and even some of them joined the faculty of Fine Arts and still join the program but as assistants to the BA's staff. They succeeded in convincing some of their friends and relatives to join this program.
- However, some of them stated that they lacked the flexibility needed to choose the art work they wished to do and that they had to stick to a certain schedule. Some even turned to other museum's education program for this specific reason.

The objectives of BA's museum education program are as follows:

1-To give a general idea about the museum.

2-To increase archeological knowledge of participants.

3-To make participants capable of expressing their archeological knowledge through art by using various ways and materials.

Art workshops on museum education using different materials include the following:

1. Drawing using coal, pastel, acrylic, and wood
2. Drawing on papyrus, glass, and foam
3. Engraving on (Plaster and limestone.)
4. Sculpturing different kinds of clay.
5. Hammering (copper and aluminum).
6. Other materials could include leather and speed ball

The program also usually includes various lectures on archeology, for example:

1. How to make papyrus (theoretically and practically).
2. Alexander the Great and the establishment of Alexandria
3. Mosaics in the Hellenistic period.
4. Mosaic, Socrates and the Meaning of Philosophy.

5. Underwater Antiquities, Clothes and Ornaments in Ancient Egypt

6. Hercules.

When BA started its museum education programs it was totally free of charge including the cost and usage of various materials. However, due to limited financial budget (only 600L.E.-700L.E. per semester), participants are informed from the beginning that any shortage of materials, they will be asked to cover it financially.

Though the size of BA's antiquities museum is small, and the number of objects is limited, the museum has much potential to create advanced educational program; it belongs to one of the most important international libraries in the world.

The new trend is to design buildings which act as a complete cultural complex where learning and education have a prominent role. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina is a great example of such cultural complexes, and its antiquities museum must take advantage of being included in this international establishment which is provided with lecture halls, a conference center, a technological museum, a planetarium, and the library itself.

2. Museum Education at Alexandria National Museum

The Alexandria National Museum opened in 2003. Since then it has been giving much attention to museum education. They accept participants of children (starting from 7 years) and young people. Most of the children keep coming each year and even when they grow up and go to college, they still attend but as assistants to the museum staff responsible for museum education.

There is cooperation between the museum and some national organizations in the field of museum education; e.g. the department of education, the faculty of Kindergarten-Alexandria University. They often make visits to schools and offer some lectures with different topics; history, culture, the antiquities at the museum and their museum education program. They distribute flyers to promote their museum education programs at schools and faculties.

Similar to BA, the education program usually takes place during the summer and mid-year school vacation. This program is available during the whole week except **FRIDAYS ONLY**. At the end of each yearly program a celebration is made, where participants are offered a certificate and the children's handcrafts are exhibited.

Children are divided into two groups according to their age; the first group for children above 10 years of age and the second is for those under 10. Each group is offered two different program days and there is always one day for lectures and another for watching films; whether cartoons or educational ones.

Unlike BA, Alexandria national museum doesn't make a technical test before accepting participants. Participants with limited art talent are offered extra help and activities suitable to their capabilities. For example, during leather workshops, participants with high art talent can make their own design on leather while those with limited art talent can use a stencil.

The art workshops and materials used at both museums are very similar. Although their budget is also limited, children can participate in these art workshops without paying any fees. Even when there is a shortage of materials, the museum's staff buys needed ones on their own expenses.

Children can also participate in acting in theater plays, where they can rehearse after finishing their art workshops.

There are also visits from children with special needs who participate in some of the workshops or attend lectures or film shows.

The number of participants has been in constant increase over the years and reached almost 40-50 persons.

The website of Alexandria National Museum is under construction and till now includes only a front page with the title, logo, a running of some antiquities and the word of the minister of culture at the opening of this museum.

3. Museum Education at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo

The Egyptian Museum in Cairo is a good example of Egyptian museums which organize developed educational programs such as the Luxor Museum, Port Said Museum, Nubia Museum and the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria.

As for the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, it began to implement programs for children in July 2002. Two special halls were designed for this purpose with lower display windows and simple labels. Some replicas were made specifically for children with special needs. In the graduation ceremony (September 2003), the children acted the play of Isis and Osiris. The museum also started a school for teaching adults in the academic year 2002/2003 (Baligh, 2005).

On the other hand, the Egyptian Museum made a great step in 2009 with the opening of the Children's Museum of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo (CMEMC). According to the **EGYPTIAN MUSEUM NEWSLETTER** (2009), educational programs of this children's museum use LEGO models alongside antiquities. It organizes workshops about topics from Ancient Egypt such as religion, daily-life and pyramid-building.

Not only is the children's museum equipped to receive youth with special needs, it also includes a library where children can read books covering topics of Ancient Egypt.

Moreover, the Egyptian Museum in Cairo began the "Mobile Museum" scheme which prepares replicas of objects to be taken to schools and children who are unable to come to the Museum.

4. Museum education at the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago

The Oriental Institute is a research organization and museum devoted to the study of the ancient Near East. It was founded in 1919 by James Henry Breasted as a part of the University of Chicago. It is an internationally recognized pioneer in the archaeology, philology, and history of early Near Eastern civilizations.

The Oriental Institute Museum displays objects recovered by the Institute's excavations in the Middle East. Permanent galleries are devoted to ancient Egypt, Nubia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, and the ancient site of Megiddo, besides some rotating exhibits. The museum's collections serve the public in exhibits and online, as well as being an extremely rich resource for scholars (<http://oi.uchicago.edu>).

A wealth of exciting programs for all ages is offered, they include courses and symposia for adults, special events and an online Kid's Corner for families, guided tours for schools and community groups, and an online Teacher Resource Center for educators (<http://oi.uchicago.edu/museum/education>).

The Institute presents a wide variety of educational experiences for adults, including classes, symposia, and distance learning courses by correspondence and online. Other educational opportunities are also available such as field trips and on-campus courses.

Hands-on workshops and free festivals for children and their families are also organized. Comprehensive programs of museum learning are specifically created to attract families who generally do not visit museums.

Throughout the year, a free Sunday afternoon film series presents the best in documentary and feature films on the ancient Near East, with docents available to answer questions in the galleries after the shows. For these family projects a coordinator is assigned to make a research which consists of polling the families to get valuable information that would enable the museum to shape the next projects. The coordinator needs to investigate how the museum visits affect the families' lives, and to determine the activities they enjoyed in the museum and those they suggest to find in future projects (Krucoff, 2002/2003).

Online resources and materials on the ancient Near East are available for middle and high school educators through the link Teacher Resource Center (TRC). Classrooms and museum lesson plans are available for teachers to print them; they give teachers guidelines about the needed plan, its objectives and used materials, the procedures suggested in teaching, and the evaluation system.

Furthermore, the Kids' Corner is another interesting link on the museum's site which includes some online activities that allow a sort of interaction between the kids and the topics presented.

Since museum education aims at expanding the audience of visitors from the University community, the education staff at the museum makes a great effort to attract them through flyers and events featuring food and fun. Those who attend the museum's programs are offered a one-year complimentary membership to the Oriental Institute. They also add their names to the e-mail list to be informed on upcoming events.

SWOT Analysis of BA's museum educational programs.

Any museum wishing to adopt a successful education policy needs to know the base line it is working from and the opportunities available to it. As a result this SWOT analysis was made in order to provide guidelines and recommendations for BA's museum education programs.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-raises art talent and knowledge of participants (to the extent that some join the faculty of fine arts).-continuity of participation (art students participate as assistants to educators).-replicas of antiquities museum's masterpieces allow blind to touch them to know how they actually look like (also children with special needs).- Participants convince others with educational programs- Antiquities museum is a part of a cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-only available during summer and mid-year school vacations.-pre-technical test exclude some interested categories from participating.-weak marketing efforts, e.g.: no site visits to schools and colleges, no direct links and sufficient information on BA's web site.-children are obliged to certain activities and schedules, i.e., education programs lack flexibility.-limited financial resources.

<p>complex at BA.</p> <p>- Lower display windows and simple labels suitable for children.</p> <p>-location of museum in front of faculty of tourism with its guidance department.</p>	<p>-limited space offered for participant's activities and exhibitions (only 2 corners).</p> <p>- Participants are only from children and young people.</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>-potentials for increased role of education programs</p> <p>-blind people and children with special needs can become targeted participants (community service).</p> <p>-more people become interested in BA in general, its antiquities museum and educational programs.</p> <p>-involving students of guiding department in education programs to increase professional skills.</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>-lack of flexibility, limited space and resources could encourage participants to switch to other museums</p> <p>-negatively affecting mission of educational programs.</p> <p>-pre-test excludes a valuable category of participants.</p>

CONCLUSION

Museums play an important role in educating people of all ages and all categories. Museum education programs enable them to fulfill their educational mission and to produce work of the best quality. As a result, it will broaden access to collections and will enhance the understanding, use, and enjoyment of museum collections catering for the needs of existing and potential visitors. Through developing successful museum education programs and marketing strategies, the number of participants will increase leading to the enlargement of the total number of visitors. Cultural tourism and museums share a common mission: to encourage personal

enrichment through intercultural understanding. Consequently, all above mentioned can be used as an effective promotional tool for cultural tourism.

PLATE I



Figure 1: One of the galleries of the BA Antiquities Museum



Figure 2: Fragment of a tomb wall. Acrylic colors on canvas



Figure3: Mosaic depicting two wrestlers



Figure4: Funerary Stela made by one of the participants- Salt engraving



Figure 5, 6: Two corners displaying children's products located beside museum entrance

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BA antiquities museum should increase its marketing effort concerning museum education programs, mainly through redesigning the web site of BA in a user-friendly way where all information will then be more accessible.
2. Flyers and brochures are also considered as an effective marketing tool for school and university students and should also be placed in tourist information centers and tourism-related business.
3. "Mobile Museum" or a "one year complimentary membership" to BA can be considered as effective marketing tool.
4. BA's museum education program should aim to make replicas of all the master pieces of the antiquities museum and offer a bigger space to display them (not just the current 2 small corners shown on figure 5, 6). Blind people will then be able to touch them and know how they look in reality. The BA could organize regular visits to blinds as well. Also it is possible to translate the labels in Braille.
5. Sending e-newsletters to inform about upcoming programs, classes and other events offered at the museum.
6. The antiquities museum must be aware of the make-up and size of its audience and to develop the services presented in order to attract new target groups.
7. To establish strong ties with schools, cultural organizations, the media, and NGO's.
8. To concentrate on all ages and different categories of the Egyptian society. Special programs should be made for seniors as well as family programs.
9. Kids corner online can be a solution to run education programs during the whole year (not just summer and mid-year school vacations)
10. To organize special trips to sites related to the museum's collections. In this respect, the collection of underwater antiquities in the Bibliotheca Alexandria Antiquities museum can play an important role. Trips to the site where these objects were hauled up can be accompanied by specialists who can provide information about the site and to tie it to the museum's collections.
11. To show historical movies on large screens (in the conference center).

12. To run training courses and teaching programs for the educational staff in the museum.
13. To carry out visitors' research and evaluation that enables the museum to follow a clear educational policy.
14. To get the audience's opinions and suggestions about future programs.
15. "I hear and forget, I see and remember, I take action and understand" (Baligh, 2005). This is the concept that was adopted by the Children's Museum in Heliopolis, near Cairo, since 1996. It is suggested that the BA antiquities museum might implement this concept according to which the senses of touch, smell, hearing and seeing are used as educational methods.
16. BA's museum education programs should consider students of the guiding department at the faculty of tourism, which is located just in front of BA, one of its main targeted participants in order to raise their guiding and professional skills.

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