

Children's Museology: Call for Papers for an edited book

Submissions are invited from researchers, curators, museum practitioners, artists, and other interested parties for an edited book on the emergent field of Children's Museology, defined as "the production of museum content and programming not just for or about children, but also by and with children in ways that engage them as valued social actors and knowledge-bearers" ([Patterson 2020](#)).

Deadline for submissions: March 30, 2022

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Focus and key questions

- How can children's active participation and contribution foster change in museum practice?
- What are the possibilities and challenges of bringing child-centred praxis into museology?
- What examples and future possibilities exist for museums to engage children as valued social agents, knowledge-bearers, and active contributors rather than mere receivers of museum content and programming provided for them by adults?
- How can museums better share authority with children and break from the adult-dominated status quo?
- What can children's museology do? What is the value and potential impact of this work?

For the past several decades, scholars, artists, and community members have challenged the exclusive traditions upon which museum practice is based. Calls for a 'new' (Vergo 1989), 'critical' (Shelton 1990), and 'post' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000) museology have been accompanied by increasing interventions and demands from members of historically marginalized communities to democratize and diversify all aspects of museum practice, including collections, exhibitions, programming, visitorship, staff, and governance. Through participatory ways of working, much progress has been made in the ways in which museums engage with difference, who is empowered to participate, and how museums harness their resources to combat inequality.

Children, however, have rarely been engaged by museums as collaborators or contributors in substantive, non-hierarchical ways, despite their increasing visibility as rights holders, global leaders, and impactful advocates for socio-political change. Outside of the creative spaces of some children's museums and a few innovative examples of co-production, most cultural institutions continue to view children as mere receivers or consumers of knowledge and programming, or, as Elee Kirk argued, 'little learners' rather than active participants and co-creators. Even when

museums include children's perspectives and cultural production, they often do so as heavy-handed interlocutors, exerting a great deal of curatorial authority.

In understanding children to be crucial members of society who hold tremendous capacity for dialogue, creativity, and innovation, the proposed volume explores the largely untapped potential of the contributions that children can make to cultural institutions. It builds on a body of work that has sought to better understand children's experiences in museums and advocates for taking children's ideas seriously by providing them with the resources and more direct pathways to participation needed to enrich museum practice in transformative ways. The book's focus is not just on the value that these collaborations may have for children, but, in turn, on the exciting new possibilities that arise when young people are enabled to reframe or uncover previously hidden histories, create lasting change in how institutions relate to their audiences, and forge more inclusive, engaging, and human-centred museum spaces.

We are particularly interested in examples from the global south, historically marginalized communities, and underserved/underprivileged populations. Contributions from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color), LGBTQIA2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit) folks, and people with disabilities/disabled people are especially welcome. We seek to include a diverse set of studies exploring children's agentic participation in a wide range of museological sites: from established, well-known galleries and museums to small, independent, local institutions, and everything in between. We are also open to submissions that focus on child-centred museological approaches taking place outside museum walls in vernacular spaces, festivals, community events, commemorations, pop-up or informal exhibitions, cultural programs, and beyond. We welcome experimental and critical perspectives, and encourage contributions that are co-authored with or draw directly on children's contributions. Other forms of creative response may also be considered.

The book aims to make a valuable intervention in several fields including museum studies, curatorial studies, heritage studies, and child studies. The proposal will be submitted to Routledge's *Museum Meanings* series.

Contributions may explore (but are not limited to) the following topics:

- Critical reflections on case studies, methodologies, and theory
- New and old forms of child-centred museological praxis - including co-creation, co-production and co-design with children - both in and outside museum spaces including exhibitions, programming, digital environments, design, and architecture
- Children's involvement in governance, strategic decision-making, and institutional change
- Intersectional projects and approaches to children's museology
- Insights and innovation around children and disability, difference, and accessibility
- Curatorial dreams that imagine future curatorial interventions or projects (Butler and Lehrer 2016)
- Critical curating; curating from the margins
- Social justice, difficult knowledge, and contested histories
- Ethics, including issues of consent, authorship, and the negotiation of (institutional) censorship in relation to children's contributions
- Perspectives that address current theoretical debates on agency, standpoint theory, ageism, children's rights, race and racism, decolonisation, and curating
- The role of the digital in enabling children and young people to participate more prolifically and publicly

Proposal Guidelines

Proposals may offer case studies of children’s museology from specific institutions, exhibitions, programs, or initiatives, or present methodological approaches, theoretical analyses, curatorial dreams, personal reflections, or creative works. All museum and gallery types (history, art, science, children’s, etc.), including non-collecting, cultural, and community-based institutions may be explored, in addition to sites and events outside of museum spaces. All ages, from infancy, early childhood, adolescence, and youth are within our purview. Proposals may be grounded in all disciplines, historical periods, and geographical locations, and we welcome submissions from academics, students, museum practitioners from all departments and backgrounds, designers, curators, artists, writers, educators, or others.

If you are interested in contributing, please send a Word compatible doc with the information listed below by February 30 or get in touch with the editors to discuss your ideas for a chapter at childrensmuseologyvolume@gmail.com.

Your proposal should:

- include a 100-word bio for each author;
- include a working title;
- convey the author’s/authors’ thesis and how the proposed article would relate to the issue’s theme;
- indicate the approaches, strategies, or knowledge that readers would take away from the article;
- convey how the article would raise questions or illuminate larger issues that are widely applicable (especially if the proposal focuses on a single project);
- take into account that articles will be expected to provide critical, candid discussions about issues and challenges

Timeline

Abstracts due: March 30, 2022

Invitations to submit full papers will be sent by May 15, 2022