Worksheet-based Educational Programs for Families: Results from the "Rekihaku Parent and Child Quiz" Program

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With increasing importance given to user perspectives in museums today, the question of how to support user learning has become a major issue. This study examines the implementation and results of the "Rekihaku Parent and Child Quiz" program, a family-oriented program which makes use of exhibit worksheets. The analysis gives special attention to the program's effectiveness in terms of target age groups and provides a discussion of the program's significance.

The program was first implemented with elementary students in mind, but it was soon discovered that middle-school as well as pre-school children were also making use of the worksheets. This prompted the creation of different varieties and types of worksheet. Sheets that incorporated text and sketches and relied principally on multiple choice answers were created for elementary and middle-school students. Sheets for younger children used photographs and asked users mainly to find the item in the exhibit. Sheets with challenging questions were created for users ranging from middle-school to adult ages. The results of each are analyzed in the study.

The study found that the approach adopted by the program—worksheets for children on the one hand and answer/explanatory sheets for their parents on the other—was very effective for worksheet's target groups but not effective when a worksheet was used by non-targeted groups. Additional support of some kind is needed in the exhibit room. Also, users tended to use the sheets in conjunction with their own viewing conditions, a fact which suggests that general support of a kind not possible through the worksheets alone is also desirable.

Because the worksheets guide a user's interaction with museum materials, the program helps train people in the use of the museum. Moreover, since it makes it possible for users to interpret materials in a way different from that intended by the scenario created by exhibit's designer, the program also qualifies the exhibit's perspective and provides an opportunity for a more subjective learning experience.

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