

Autism, Hyperconnectivity, and Documentary

Salar Rafieian
Documentation Specialist
Malek National Library and Museum
rafieian.salar@gmail.com

Abstract:

With regard to ICOM's theme for 2018 International Museum Day – Hyperconnected museums: New approaches, new publics – one can expect that documentation potentially pave the way for this interactive context. From the viewpoint of availability to publics, rather than how the work itself is able to connect, a work's documentations (from pictures and data to metadata) make playfulness and enjoyable, destructive, and, sometimes constructive mischiefs accessible.

Especially, if the audience can find a way through the works in a museum, and extract something new from inside an exhibit, documentation is mandated to record it, analyze it, and publish it as metadata and added value.

Now, if, beyond the typical structure of museums, due to especial mental or physical conditions, this new audience seeks especial circumstances to access museum works, then documentation, based on its resources, is able to make multimedia access available to facilitate access for this type of audience, and at the same time, it can receive, analyze, and archive the audience's encounter and reactions.

Among those audiences, people with Autism Spectrum Symptoms would probably have a unique understanding and appreciation of each work, due to their potential mental capabilities and extraordinary brain functions.

People with one of autism symptoms, as a group of people with especial needs, are potentially one of the most attractive new publics and audiences who have a twofold importance in interaction with museums; firstly, and generally, as an audience with especial needs when encountering the intrinsic aspects of a museum (entertainment, education, etc.), and, secondly, as a viewer with a unique perspective when interacting and analyzing museum works – a person who would probably see things within museum works that would be otherwise neglected in the everyday natural (even though expert) observation or may be totally unobservable.

Autism is a neurological development disorder diagnosed by damaged verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, stereotypical behavior, and limited hobbies.

Problems with social skills and interactions is one of the major symptoms in people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This problem varies from child to child depending on the level of performance and age.

Meanwhile, metaphorically speaking, museum works can also suffer a spectrum of autism symptoms in their encounter with their audience! From this point of view, we can say that these works have poor social skills, including eye contact, initiating acts of communication, using nonverbal communication, gestures, and facial expressions. People with autism disorder display the lack of social skills in different areas such as limited eye contact, joint attention, making conversation, and making friends.

With regard to ICOM's theme for 2018 International Museum Day – Hyperconnected museums: New approaches, new publics – using new sciences, such as cognitive sciences and different rehabilitation branches, including that for Autism Spectrum Disorders, and utilizing multimedia methods, from the viewpoint of museology, documentation may be able to bridge between museum works and audiences, particularly those with especial needs, in order to expand social interaction between them.

Hyperconnectivity, although initially implies a means of communication between museums and their audiences, on the other hand, could be generalized to include concepts of sciences, technologies, and any other means of communication in society. From this point of view, just as drama therapy has been long accepted among its audiences, museum therapy could be considered another means for hyperconnection among museums. There is this promise, however, that these new areas in the arena of museum, not only helps the audience, but also paves the way for documentation of a vast spectrum of feedbacks, reactions, or actions that could be potentially considered part of the data. From this perspective, a hyperconnected museum is a context that, further to museum concepts, includes other sciences as well.