

Planning, Innovation, Sustainability

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1. HOWARD GARDNER REVISITED. Twenty years ago, Howard Gardner proposed replacing the notion of general intelligence with multiple autonomous intelligences (currently 8 or 9), for which no two people possess exactly the same profile. His work provides an intellectual foundation for offering diverse modes of informal learning. This very readable paper by Gardner presents a personal history of the development of his theory and possible directions for further research, including the biological basis and how the intelligences can best be mobilized to achieve specific pedagogical goals; see [http://www.pz.harvard.edu/PIs/HG\\_MI\\_after\\_20\\_years.pdf](http://www.pz.harvard.edu/PIs/HG_MI_after_20_years.pdf).

Gardner has also recently published "Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds" (Harvard Business School Press). He has identified seven factors or "levers" that play key roles (and happen to start with re-): Reason, Research, Resonance, Representational rediscrptions, Resources and rewards, Real-world events, and Resistance. Time will tell whether these factors will have the same staying power.

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2. PARTNERSHIPS FOR FREE-CHOICE LEARNING. Researchers at the Urban Institute with a grant from IMLS studied public libraries, museums, and public broadcasters working together. Using survey and field research, they explored the contributions, benefits, and risks of partnering across different types of activities. One of the most interesting sections analyzed the types of risks involved (capacity, strategy, commitment, compatibility) and possible ways to mitigate them (clear goals and objectives, feasible timetables, timely communication, clarity and appropriateness of assignments, recognition of contributions, connecting like with like). The examples may not all be relevant to you, but the study offers helpful perspective for collaboration among informal learning institutions. You can find the report at: <http://www.urbanlibraries.org/collaborationspartnerships.htm>.

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3. RESEARCH IN EDUCATION. Due in part to No Child Left Behind, formal education is being pushed towards basing practice on evidence rather than trial and error, similar to the transformation of medicine and agriculture over the past century. Comprehensive guidelines for applying scientific

principles to education have been proposed by the National Research Council in "Scientific Research in Education"; <http://books.nap.edu/books/0309082919/html/>. But there is a long way to go. As noted in Education Week (Jan. 21, 2004), "we have almost no idea what works." The U.S. Dept. of Education has set up the What Works Clearinghouse <http://www.w-w-c.org> to begin the process of identifying effective educational interventions. Shouldn't those of us concerned with informal learning be undertaking a similar effort?

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4. DEATH ON DISPLAY? In the last issue, you read about the new "adults-only" facility of the Science Museum in London. As an example of how far the Dana Centre may be willing to go, it is considering displaying a decomposing body in a glass enclosure to prompt debate and tackle taboos about death. Needless to say, such an exhibit will raise a slew of issues. It will be interesting to see whether this project gets the go ahead or gets buried.

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5. PERSONAL NOTE. While continuing to assist NSF as Program Officer for Informal Science Education, I am working with a range of (non-conflicting) clients, including the U.S. Dept. of Energy and the National Health Museum. For further information, visit <http://www.MuseumsPlusMore.com>.

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