

# It's All Fun and Games: The Design of Digital Interactive Exhibits

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## What is this project about?

This thesis looks at 15 years of design of digital (computer based) interactive exhibits in regional museums.

- It attempts to understand the assumptions made by museum staff and designers of what child visitors find interesting and fun.
- To understand how museum staff and designers have in the past and the present designed for child audiences.
- To reflect if the public understandings (and misunderstandings) of digital literacy has been what governs digital interactive design and whether these understandings have changed with changes in digital literacy theory.

Science Museum, London



The Herbert - History Gallery interactive quiz

## Where did I do the research?

National Space Centre, Leicester  
Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry  
Weston Park Museum, Sheffield

Using: Interviews, design briefs, gallery observation and ongoing project design observation

*Digital literacy:* ability to access, use and understand digital systems in everyday life.

*Interactives:* computer-based systems used in museum exhibitions, where visitors are required to interact through physical means (ex. button pushing).

## What did I find out?

UK Regional museums are different than nationals and struggle to create expensive digital interactives, so they have to be cautious and minimal in what they do.

- Staff widely believe that children (and adults) want interactives in museums, particularly now with so much technology readily available to the public, as they find them more interesting and engaging.
- Regional museums have their own design practices based on their staff specialties and backgrounds and this often changes from project to project through a desire for ownership and personalization particular to their institution and visitors.
- Staff commonly refer to public discourses of digital literacy, but seem to be several years behind popular understanding of how digitally literate children are (or are not).

## What's next?

Further investigation of other regional museums needs to be done to better understand the differences and similarities in design and assumptions amongst staff.

- Research into the role evaluation plays in staff assumptions could be investigated and also how useful evaluation really is in understanding museum audiences.



Weston Park Museum – Design for Life interactive



National Space Centre – Google Earth