

Why Shanghai needs to

Create a **new** **Children's**
Museum

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A Proposal for a New Children's Museum in Shanghai

Let's Create a children's museum in Shanghai



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Mission statement:

Shanghai needs to have a children's museum. Having a children's museum would strengthen the local community and help foster a civic identity for the future. In targeting youth, children's museums create a culture of museums and public education from which future generations will draw and use to enrich the city. My proposal for the Shanghai Children's Museum would be designed not only for changing children's lives, but also for educating parents to better understand their children and themselves.

Part One:

- Shanghai's museums and museum culture
- Shanghai's Children's Palace and form of educational programming
- The education culture of Shanghai

Part Two:

- Philosophy of Shanghai's museums
- General ideas of the American Children's museums

Part Three:

- Challenges faced in building a Shanghai Children's Museum
- Competing models for children's museums and the need to for a successful museum that is specific to the Chinese context
- How to create an education outline for the new children's museum to meet local parents' needs and social needs?



Introduction

As China further develops its power in terms of culture in multiple ways, such as building museums, and developing educational systems locally, for instance, it begins to focus on building numbers of museums in its major cities. Until 2005, there were 2,300 museums, with nearly 10,000 new exhibitions annually in the nation. In Shanghai, there are 106 museums within both the central city and suburbs. Since 1990, the economic reforms introduced by Deng Xiao-Ping resulted in intense redevelopment and financing in Shanghai, which led to its becoming the largest port in the world in 2005.¹

Due to Shanghai's fast growing economy and historical landmarks, it will hold the Expo 2010 in May. By that time, Shanghai will be one of the most famous tourist destinations in the world. The Expo 2010 will bring Shanghai into the center of the world's stage and enhance the harmony between its culture and the diverse cultures of the world, whether or not Shanghai is ready to face the impact from this growth.

¹ [http:// www.china.com.cn](http://www.china.com.cn)

Shanghai is growing internationally at a speed that may be too fast to go back and take care of its local culture. Shanghai should not focus only on building its museum infrastructure in terms of the variety of museum types, but also on the museums' content and visitor studies, in order to create a new Chinese museology.

Exploring challenges that Shanghai museums are facing today, and creating a new Chinese Children's Museum in Shanghai are the major foci of the thesis. Children's museums are very important in creating a sense of civic life and culture. The challenge in creating a Shanghai children's museum is to utilize the successful model of American children's museums while adopting it strategically to a Chinese reality. Having a Chinese children's museum that emphasizes the local culture will enrich the city's cultural life. A children's museum in Shanghai would target the youth and build a civic life from the experiences of growing up with a museum that functions to educate and inspire Chinese society. In this way, Shanghai has the potential to develop civically, economically and culturally.

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Part One

Shanghai is the biggest city in China with over 16,000,000 people. Originally a fishing and textiles town, Shanghai grew to be an important city because of its special location around the Yangtze River Delta. It has long served as a vital port city since Shanghai's opening to foreign trade with the passing of the 1842 Treaty of Nanking. Once Mr. Deng Xiaoping opened national business policy in spring 1990, Shanghai accelerated its developing speed and became an international business center of China and one of the high economic centers of the developing countries in the world. Nowadays, Shanghai is not only a city of China, but also one of major international business markets, and draws people's attention from all around the world. It brings multiple cultures into the city similar to today's New York; people who travel from different countries all over the world are living and working in Shanghai. As it grows into an international city and becomes more multi-cultural, Shanghai needs to focus strengthening its local culture by building multiple educational media to educate its residents, especially young kids, in an effective way.

Shanghai is not only a center of multinational finance and business in China, but also an attractive market for international business in the world because of its modern attractions, high population, and high economic value. Being a major target in Asian market in terms of globalization, Shanghai has become a melting pot over the past ten years, and will continue to transform the shape of Chinese culture. While these changes have improved the city's civic life, it is in

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danger of losing its local culture, which is evidenced by the decline in both its language, Shanghainese, and cuisine. As Shanghai develops attractions, which draw people from all points of the world, Shanghai has been forced to accelerate its pace of construction.

A large number of the Fortune 500 companies have located in Shanghai in the past 15 years. These global companies brought their culture and products to impact Shanghai's local culture strongly. Since the first time McDonald and KFC came to Shanghai in 1989, they have become giants in the food business. On June 1st, 1996, only 7 years later, a KFC located in Xu Jiahui made \$70,000 in daily sales, which broke KFC's record for the highest daily income from any its stores. After that, Shanghai started to adopt more and more western fast food, such as Pizza Hut, Burger King, and Haagen-Dazs. These fast food businesses attracted more and more children and teenagers, and ultimately marginalized locally based restaurants businesses. As a result, many traditional homemade foods were lost during the past 10 years.

Not all impacts came from other cultures. There were some caused by Shanghai itself. For instance, its local language is one of the city treasures, even a city identity, but there was a governmental policy, enacted 10 years ago, which prohibits students to speak Shanghainese. Since this legislation, Mandarin has been the sole official language and is the language spoken in schools across China. Unlike Hong Kong and Guangdong Province, where Cantonese, their local language, is their official language, Shanghai has been

forced to use Mandarin until now. As a result, most high school students cannot speak Shanghainese. Children between elementary school ages to 15 years old can't communicate with their parents in Shanghainese and even cannot understand their parents' Shanghainese. The reason why two generations cannot use one language to communicate is, because of the older generation whose ages are above 50, experienced World War II (1939-1945) when they were very young children, and the Great Culture Revolution (1966-1976) when they were teenagers. These two big wars caused them to lose chances to study in schools, so most people of that age group only speak Shanghainese, the language they speak in their daily lives. Thus, when their grandchildren are educated in Mandarin and only speak Mandarin, the society of Shanghai becomes fractured and risks losing its connection to the past. This was a serious concern and source of shock in the Chinese society of recent years. Scholars realized that after that policy was established it meant that Shanghai might lose its language in the future, so they suggested that schools should

encourage children to speak Shanghainese in some particular classes.

Becoming popular, famous, and international is essential to a city's urban life. However, with such a rapid pace of transformation, it risks losing its identity. Shanghai has rapidly grown in the past 30 years, and it is still moving forward. Shanghai must take control of its cultural transformation and think about preserving its local culture for the future. There are many ways to preserve a city's local culture. One is building museums to keep local historical treasures, and using museums as an educational medium to educate the public especially children; this is what the government is trying to do now. Based on the official data, up to 2004, there were approximate 1552 museums in the nation, and up to 2005, the sum of museums was increased to 2300. The Shanghai government has been busy building new museums, and it seems that Shanghai has achieved different types of museums. It is time to be aware of how museums have functioned in the society and what the public has perceived, discovered, or learned from museums.

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Stephen E. Weil was a strong advocate for museums and believer in their importance to civic life. As the former deputy director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, he was an intellectual leader in the museum field through his work at the Smithsonian Institution. As director of the Hirshhorn, he was a prolific writer, publishing works such as: *Making Museums Matter*, and many articles for the American Association of Museums. He also taught at the Getty Leadership Institute, and participated in numerous conferences and workshops around the globe (Freudenheim). He saw museums as crucial social enterprises that could and should pursue their goals rationally and competently. This idea is much needed in Chinese museums and cultural institutions, and has yet to be properly addressed by the Chinese government. Creating a bridge between visitors and guiding the public to interact with museum's programs are the most important challenges to Shanghai museums. Generally, not all museums need to focus on interesting interactive programming to function successfully. Such programming tends to be the focus

among science, history, and children's museums. These types of museums are designed to educate people and make advances made in intellectual disciplines accessible to the public. Creating a great environment for visitors to enjoy artworks achieves art museum's mission and goals successfully.

As a city with an endangered cultural and historical identity, Shanghai needs educational programming. In creating an interactive and engaging children's museum, Shanghai should look at American Children's Museums that emphasize programming and educational purposes. The difference between children's museums and other types of museums is that the children's museum is designed for a specific audience. The children's museum is not only designed for children to achieve the goal "of Learning through Play", but also to help build a broader museum community. Museologist, John Cotton Dana asserts:

The museum can help people only if they use it; they

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will use it only if they know about it and only if attention is given to the interpretation of its possessions in terms they, the people, will understand.

--by John Cotton Dana¹
(Quoted in Alexander, 13.)

Based on Dana's social philosophy, people should know what a museum is before they decide if they want to go. A children's museum is a good place to start to bring children and their parents to come into museums, be exposed to museum culture, and know more about museums. Different disciplines of museums have different goals and mission statements. They should not only stay with their mission statement and make clear who is its target audience is, but also know how to attract the public. It is not easy to bring people into museums more focused on education than fantastical displays. It is also not easy to make people know that museums can reach their needs. If the public knows what museums can give them in terms of gaining knowledge and fun, museums will never be isolated from their audiences and will be

always needed by their audiences.

Shanghai's museums not only need to build bridges between the public and the museum field through clarifying their goals and missions, but also need to have an understanding of their target demographic. A number of Shanghai's museums have impressive historic architectural styles and great collections, yet they struggle to attract local visitors.

As formerly stated, there are approximately 106 museums in Shanghai, large and small. Many are government- funded or college owned. One of the largest museums in Shanghai is the Shanghai Museum located at the People's Square near Nanjing Road. As a museum of ancient Chinese art, the Shanghai Museum possesses a collection of 120,000 precious works of art. Its rich and high-quality collection of ancient Chinese bronze, ceramics, painting and calligraphy is especially celebrated in the world. Founded and first open to the public in the building which previously was the horseracing club at 325 W. Nanjing Road in

1 Museums in Motion (Edward P. Alexander), 13.

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These two photoes were taken in the day that the Shanghai Museum and a Beijin museum were the first day starting free admission.

There hardly found families and children in lines. Why museums started free admission, but still could not attract yound audience to go and visit?



These two photoes were taken in the Shanghai Museum.

There hardly found local visitors in the museum. Most visitors were foreign visitors. Why the Shanghai Museun has one of the great national colletion but canot attract local visitors?



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in 1959. The museum developed very quickly in regards to its acquisitions, conservation, research, exhibitions, education and cultural exchanges with other institutes. In 1992, the Shanghai municipal government allocated a piece of land at the very center of the city, the People's Square, as the Museum's new site, which has a construction space of 39,200 square meters. Its unique architectural form of a round top with a square base, symbolizes the ancient Chinese philosophy that the square earth is under the round sky, and eloquently combines traditional and modern architectural styles.

The present Shanghai Museum has eleven galleries, three special temporary exhibition halls, and a big collection, which includes paintings, calligraphy, jade, seals, bronzes, ceramics, coins, sculpture, furniture and so on. The Shanghai Museum started free admission on March 10th 2008. By July 19th 2008, the attendance of the museum was 725,000. This high number means the Shanghai Museum will get 2,900,000 visitors a year, is a

quarter of the population of Shanghai. Among 2,900,000 visitors, most of them are tourists, and the rest are people who are retired or part of the older generation, whose average age may be around 70s.¹ While the elder generation can be counted as local visitors, they should not be the sole target demographic of museums, as this would ultimately diminish the importance of museums and their role in public life.

Shanghai Museum starkly contrasts with the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the largest children's museum in the United States and may be one of the largest children's museum in the world, has an average yearly attendance of more than 1,000,000 people (Norris,1). The Metropolitan Indianapolis Area (Nine-County Region) is an area comprising nine counties in the center of the U.S. state of Indiana with a 2007 population estimate of 1,774,665. The combined statistical area population of Indianapolis was estimated in 2007 to be 2,014,267, making it the 23rd-largest in the U.S. (Wikipedia). As a city, which is not even

1 <http://www.shanghaimuseum.net/>

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within the top five in America in terms of size, its attendance figures still manage to equal a third of those for the Shanghai Museum, situated in China's most populous city. In comparing attendance figures between the Children's Museum of Indianapolis and the Shanghai Museum, in relation to their respective populations, it is obvious that Shanghai's figures are relatively low. The Shanghai Museum draws only a quarter of its population per year, while the Children's Museum of Indianapolis draws over half of its population. Additionally, the demographic of visitors for the Shanghai Museum are mostly tourists and the few natives that do attend are predominantly elderly. The disconnect between the Shanghai Museum and its local community is a far greater problem than simply its relatively low attendance figures for one of the biggest cities in China. The questions posed here for all museums in Shanghai in general are: Do museums have clear ideas of their goals and missions? Do museums cater their goals and missions to specific target audiences? Can museums increase local engagement through developing their educational programs?

If they do, a further question for them is: Are there any other ways to build audiences for the Shanghai museum world?

It does not mean the Shanghai Museum should attract half of the population to the museum, but it needs to consider how to bring more local visitors in. Great collections and charming buildings represent a city's treasures and its cultural and historical identity. It needs to be noticed by people who are living in Shanghai, proud of Shanghai, and love Shanghai. Most people who are working and studying in Shanghai are busy with daily life, but were they to have had great museum experiences when growing up, they would have come to see museums as an important forum of social and intellectual engagement.

Because of Shanghai's high population, the study lives of students are very competitive. They are forced to keep learning during their leisure time. To meet parents' and students' needs, many personal tutoring centers and learning centers become

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popular. A typical interesting form of the children's institute in Shanghai is called The China Welfare Institute Children's Palace (CWICP).¹ It is a Chinese form of a children's public institute that is organizes a series of centers with functioning on a very model from that of western children's museums. The CWICP was founded by Song Qing-ling on June 1st, 1953 (Quili). During these 57 years since its founding, it has quickly grown and come to be very successful in Shanghai. It features: children's academic computing, the Kid's club, the Children's stage, the Children's Science Center, the Children's Greeting Team, Children's Journalist Club, and etc. These clubs actually tend to serve only very advanced levels, which is similar to adult's newspapers, I. T teams (The Internet Technique team), and opera troupes.

Based on the current education system and the high population in Shanghai, the examinations for entering the Elementary Schools, the Junior High Schools, Senior High Schools, and Colleges are extremely competitive and stressful. Therefore,

children always carry their parents' heavy expectations. The huge difference between American children and Chinese children is childhood. Children in Shanghai will be sent to talent training centers, such as drawing training, piano training, and training for many other musical instruments. When they enter school, their lives become more stressful. Dealing with 5-7 major classes in the schools and facing advanced level talent training, these children have less time to enjoy life and playing. American children have more freedom and happiness in childhood compared to children in Shanghai. American children are more likely to be encouraged by their parents to choose the classes and careers based on their interests. American children not only have more choices as to what they are interested in, but are also encouraged to have different learning styles.

Children living in Shanghai have really stressful lives. They play a full- time student role, and spend all their leisure time either going to see private tutors for personal lessons, classes, including:

¹ <<http://www.cwikids.org/rendera/node2202/node2600/node2601/index.html>>.

advanced English, Mathematics, and Chemistry), or to the China Welfare Institute Children's Palace to participate in formal trainings, such as: high level musical instrument lessons, professional singing, advance computer skills training, and dance. During the summer and winter vacations the CWICP offers one to two month special academic training for school age children, ranges from all public school's required courses and elective classes, such as drawing class and piano class. Participating in these kinds of special trainings is going to be a sort of fashion in parents' minds. Sometimes the advanced level trainings have to be signed in one or two semesters before they actually start. Parents in Shanghai very often send their children to austere training classes, and children in Shanghai are busy on transferring from schools to professional training or tutor centers.

Children's lives in Shanghai are extremely difficult and stressful. All the activities that occur in The China Welfare Institute Children's Palace's associated centers take place in the

public eye, even aiming for an international audience for the reception of its achievements. For instance, 80 Shanghai pupils dressed in Shanghai Expo mascot "Haibao" costumes with colorful gauzy wings and on roller skates, skated in front of the 16.80-meter-long and 11-meter-high float, dancing and performing. The pupils are going to have the same examination as others, but they spent additional time on roller skating training for the Expo Float performance.¹

Children are the future. There is nothing wrong with spending more time on studies, but maybe we can create another form of children's palace, and give children another alternative learning style. We do not want all children are be trained the same to all have certificate on high- level musical instruments' competitions; to draw sketches as artists; to improve their abilities on English, Mathematic, and Literature. They are like a remote control model tank, and the remote is in their parents' hand; they run only when their parents want them to. Parents have to guide their children in

1 <http://en.expo2010.cn/a/20100103/0000001.htm>

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the right direction, but must also know how to let a child learn to think or make decisions by his or herself. Obviously, the CWICP is not the right place offering opportunities for parents knowing what their children's needs and interacting with their children, because it is a one-way road, only offering lessons to children irregardless of their passions.

Shanghai can confronting these culture impacts through establishing museums that attract local visitors and work to preserve local culture on broad scale, including: its language, cuisine, buildings, and understanding of its cultural past. It is not bad to become a melting pot, but not at the expense of losing a sense of identity and history. Lacking local visitors, Shanghai museums should look at American children's museums and study what a children's museum can offer to increase children's enjoyment, and to consider the further functions of children's museums. Children's museums ought to not only offer children a place to play and learn, but also gives them good museum

experiences. In this way, they will become museums' audience when they become adults.

What is the most important thing to Shanghai's children? How can we help them enjoy their childhoods, build a love of education and self- discovery creativity, and can gain knowledge?

Part Two

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Shanghai has approximately 106 museums. Most museums have the same situation as the Shanghai Museum has. Based on the data of the visitor studies, most visitors are tourists and the rest are of an elderly demographic. The question of how to pull young age groups and other age groups is a major concern for the Shanghai museum world. Various reasons can cause that phenomenon, including: unclear goals and missions, unclear target audiences, or unvalued programs, but lack of museum experience can be another big issue. A simple survey has been designed for gathering data to compare different feelings about museums between Chinese people and American people. The survey size is small. It is 15 on each side and has four questions:

1. Did you have museum experiences when you were a child?
2. What types of museums were you both drawn to and accustomed to as a child?
3. Have you been to museums in the last 6 months?
4. What do you think about museums?

The data from the first question is very shocking. Most Chinese respondents said they had not had any museum experiences, whereas American surveyors said they had many museum experiences when they were young. Children's museums were those that were most visited by Americans in this study. Second to children's museums were aquariums. For question number three, there is almost the same data as the first question. Most Chinese surveyors have not been to any museums or attractions in the last 6 months, whereas many Americans polled had been to museums recently. Interestingly, in responses to question four, all Chinese surveyors thought museums were a place to display treasures and artifacts, while most Americans thought museums were a place to display objects and a place where they can hang out with their friends and families. Based on this survey, children's museums create great museum experiences for Americans and they tend to think museums have important social functions. However, museums are not a part of Chinese peoples' lives.

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The data might not be strong enough to show how good museum experiences would influence a child's later life. However, the data shows that many Americans who had early museum experiences come back to museums when they became adults, and see museums as social public places. For Chinese people who do not go to museums frequently, or never even think of museums as a public places where they can spend time hanging out with friends, museums seem not to exist in their world. And that makes museums lose their social function.

American museums attract visitors by not only creating great environments, but also knowing their visitors and their needs deeply. American children's museums have their clear goals and mission. In the mission statements provided by most of the American children's museums, the intent of the museum staff and other personnel is to offer a safe and attractive place where children can see, touch, do, explore, create, imagine, and interact with their environment, thereby offering possible learning and

enjoyment experiences, which they unfortunately do not receive in the more structured environments of their schools.

Unlike the weak Chinese museology, American museums started in the 18th century and developed slowly but systematically. The founding in about 1870 of three great museums: the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston marked the entry of the United States into the museum mainstream. By 1900 American museums were becoming centers of education and public enlightenment.¹ Until now, American museums have continued their leadership in educational programs. They frequently refer to the kind of education they provide as informal, which means any types of teaching outside of a classroom. Another big highlight of American museology is the emphasis given on educational functions by museums and the corresponding social implications. Many American museums in the past few decades have transformed into cultural centers with music,

1 Museum in Motion, 7.

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theater, motion pictures, dance, and other performing arts programs. State museum organizations send concerts, plays, dance groups, and lecturers on circuit, as well as traveling exhibitions.

The oldest children's museums in the United States opened in Boston and Brooklyn around the turn of the last century and they were the first ones in the world. Growth was slow, but today, children's museums are a growing venture in the United States, and indeed, the world. There were a large number of museums opened in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, children's museums have continued to open all over the country, in urban and suburban settings, in small and large buildings, with a huge number of exhibitions and with a small number of exhibitions. Children and their adult companions are encouraged to explore, interact, and experiment with art, nature, science and technology.

There were many people who came up with great thoughts about children's museums and made changes in them. Howard

Gardner, professor of education at Harvard University, states:

I think the museum for young people is one of the most hopeful institutions in the world today. The youth museum gives more people a chance to develop their intelligences and to find out what they can do both for productive for them, but which can be productive for others.... They can really help kids go beyond the unschooled mind, to engender genuine understanding, while at the same time preserving the best of the five- year- old mind. If kids have a chance to go to children's museums or discovery museums to learn about their own minds, the kinds of things they can do and what it means to discover stuff, they really have the best chance to do creative work when they are older.

-- Howard Gardner ¹
(Norris, 3).

1 Children's Museum: An American Guidebook, 3.

Gardner believes this kind of learning greatly influences children's lives as they get older. Gardner clearly presents the goals of children's museums and their public functions. Creating the great museum experience for preschool- age children is a wise method for building museums' future audiences. What makes children love children's museums and causes them to willing to go again and again? Because of that, children's museums are the museums that are really designed and planned for children.

Another important writer on children's museology is Anna Billings Gallup. Gallup argues: "To inspire children with this love for and pride in the institution, they must feel that it was created for them, and that in all of its plans, it puts the child first" (Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 169).¹ Gallup, a pioneer of children's museums, was appointed Curator of Brooklyn Children's Museum in 1926. Later, she becomes Director and Curator-in-Chief, a position she holds until her retirement in 1937. She thought that a children's museum is a distinctive institution. Not only was Anna Gallup thinking this, but also Michael Spock,

¹ *Museums in Motion*, 169.

former director of the Boston Children's Museum, explains that children's museums fundamentally differ from other museums in that their very name specifies the audience, not the subject of their collections. Since Gallup became a children's museum curator, and created "an attractive resort for children", her belief that, to be effective, the museum must put children first, has not been changed. The Brooklyn Children's Museum seems to have done it all: worked with teachers, science clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, the Americanization School (designed to teach immigrants English following World War I), and engaged children as both teachers and learners. Their collections served the children; they rejected the significance of expensive rare artifacts in favor of objects and specimens that children could use, handle, and experiment with (Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 170).¹ All collections were used to assist children's learning. Opening exhibit cases and allowing visitors to look closely and to handle objects, was another simple idea brought into the museum field by Anna Gallup. This idea addressed her belief completely.

¹ *Museums in Motion*, 170.

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In American museology and American Children's Museology, it appears that museums' social functions significantly improve the society. Shanghai's museology is less developed. There are more than 100 museums, but they attract few local visitors. Shanghai needs a children's museum in order to help children to identify with the city where they live with, to preserve local culture in a way accessible to children, and build audiences for the museum community.

The Shanghai Children's Museum will be a museum that addresses Anna Gallup's beliefs, while being specifically designed to preserve local culture and to build a museum audience. Preserving Shanghai's culture will not only protect its local culture, but will also help children to identify where they come from. Knowing what is Shanghai, what are differences between Shanghai and other cities, what culture that Shanghai has, are good for children to identify Shanghai, especially for the people who immigrate to Shanghai. Nowadays, more and more people go

to Shanghai and make it their second home, for adults, they have their significant city identities, but how about their children who were born in Shanghai and grew in Shanghai? The museum is for all people living in Shanghai to know its history and culture better. After knowing the city deeply, then they can be proud of the city, or decide whether leave or not. People should understand that whether they like or not, the city culture is always there. All people who are living in Shanghai should know its culture and find balance of culture conflicts. It is also important and helpful to the development in the future.

The new children's museum in Shanghai, also will give children good museum experiences in order to make sure they come back to museums in the future. Preserving local culture is not a direct goal of the Shanghai Children's Museum. It is a result and effect of having the children's museum. The Shanghai Children's Museum is designed and developed only for children to experience an amazing culture tour and build museum community.

What is the difference between the China Welfare Institute Children's Palace and the Shanghai Children's Museum? What is the function of the Shanghai Children's Museum to the museum community and society? What will be offered to children and their parents in the Shanghai Children's Museum? What is the meaning of having the Shanghai Children's Museum?

Part Three

What are the differences between the Shanghai Children's Museum and The China Welfare Institute Children's Palace?

Like the CWICP, my proposed Shanghai Children's Museum would function as an education center, however it would serve a completely different social and cultural purpose. The CWICP is focused exclusively on formal education contents' trainings, whereas the Shanghai Children's Museum would function more informally, as it would offer children a place to gain knowledge and experiences that cannot get from schools, for instance, leadership ability, ability of handling relationship between people, and etc. It would also provide a more inclusive framework of educational program that presently operating in China, which determines students' success and access to enrichment programs at a very young age.

The idea of learning through play, central to the Shanghai Children's Museum, means that children gain knowledge by

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experiencing the programs and exploring the exhibitions in the museum. In the museum, all programs and exhibitions are designed for stimulating children's curiosities of the environment, nature science, and human relationship, in order to help them to find interests about different classes offered in schools. By knowing what they want to further discover and study, children and their parents get better idea about what they want to be in the future.

The China Welfare Institute Children's Palace offers children additional opportunities to learn advanced level courses, and educates children in a formal way, just like schools. Usually, an instructor gives a lesson to 20 or 30 students in a class, and offers short systematic lessons on English, mathematics, and literature during both summer and winter vacations. In contrast to the CWICP, the Shanghai Children's Museum is a place in which the goal is to give children great museum experiences. This means that there will be no instructors, desks, and textbooks in the

museum. The focus is instead on trying to give children great museum experiences. All programs and information in the museum are designed to stimulate children to think and learn by themselves and to help parents become positively involved in promoting their children's interests and passions. Parents will know their children deeper through the learning through play programs and will be better equipped to make wise decisions for their children's future.

Another huge difference in emphasis between the two institutions is, that the Shanghai Children's Museum will be a medium that communicates local culture, designing contemporary exhibits to show typical local treasures including the language, Shanghai's history, and its culinary culture designed for children from ages 0-7. This museum will develop programs to help the target age groups further understand what Shanghai had in the past, what Shanghai has in the present, and what they want Shanghai to be in the future. Emphasizing the city's identity is not

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something that will isolate Shanghai children from other cities' children, but rather something that will both help them know the city they are living in and connect them with their elder generation.

The Shanghai Children's Museum is not only designed for preserving local culture, but will also build museums' audiences in the future for the Shanghai community. It will have an enormous social impact, in encouraging young parents to bring their children to the Shanghai Children's Museum for family activities. In doing so, it will likely inspire a broader museum culture and public engagement with museums. This is like throwing a stone into still water, thus causing the ripples that spread in rings. A great children's museum experience will inspire children to return again and again, and also inspire interest among parents in Shanghai's history and culture. Children are a key to change in society.

In Shanghai presently, to compete in the stressful and

competitive future, young parents choose life goals for their children without knowing if they will be interested in them. When children enter school, they are forced to become the man or woman that their parents created. This has caused less communication between children and their parents. Thus, another benefit that the Shanghai Children's Museum will bring to the society is to engage young parents to participate in children's activities in order to know their children better and offer children another way to learn new things. All programs developed in the Shanghai Children's Museum require parents to enjoy with their children, so they will never feel facing stress and difficulties alone. Another reason to always have parents to participate in activities with children is to create the idea about family. Parents should consider their children, as a part of a family, even though the children are very young. If children are given choices as adults when they are very young, they will get used to making decisions or considering things in a responsive way. This can help make children think more individually and better understand their goals

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and interests, rather than relying on their parents to decide their future for them.

The new Shanghai Children's Museum has to have clear goals and mission statement. They will focus on developing the layout and functions of general areas. Children's museums are designed specifically for children, so the focus will always be based on visitors' needs, including children and their adult companions. The target audiences are children's ages from 0-7. The contemporary exhibitions developed in the museum emphasize preserving local culture, such as the Language Corner, the Fish Town neighborhood and the Shanghai Food Court. Since Shanghai's education field has started to care if children can speak Shanghainese, and has set up classes to teach and encourage children to speak Shanghainese in public schools, the Language Corner will likely attract interest. Shanghai's society is beginning to realize the need to preserve its language and culture. The Language Corner will do exactly this and even have a board for

children to post their thoughts on Shanghainese. Some related programs are developed to offer children opportunities to discuss some popular current social topics, which contain news about children, and posted weekly in the area. Some exhibitions are designed to help children to identify who they are, and educate children about city history in an informal way. Fish Town will be an exhibition inspired by the City Caper, an exhibit in the Please Touch Museum that lets children discover how Shanghai looked 100 years ago. It will also have some information and knowledge about local fish. This helps children to identify the city's history. There will only be local food displayed in the Shanghai Food Court. No western fast food will appear in the exhibition.

The Shanghai Children's Museum is a children's museum belonging to Shanghai and identifying with Shanghai, which means it will take the idea of American children's museum, but not adapt it to its own culture. The Shanghai Children's Museum has its own style based on its local cultures. The difference

between American Children's Museums and the Shanghai Children's Museum is the Shanghai Children's Museum's emphasis on Shanghai's local culture. For instance, the Beijing Children's Museum will have totally different exhibitions. Beijing is a city speaking Mandarin, so it has no need to preserve its local language. On the other hand, Beijing was not a fishing town in earlier history. It was Imperial Palace in history and has always been an important place to China, so maybe the Beijing Children's Museum will focus more on the Chinese Empire is history, and national treasures, such as the Great Wall, and the Imperial Palace.

American children's museums are a good sample to study, but not a model to imitate. Chinese children's museums will not have a standard formal outline to follow, but will only emphasize on local culture in order to help children to explore the city they living in and identify who they are. Different cities will have their different children's museum with different focuses responsive to the local contexts. In the layout and program designs, the Chinese

children's museums will have their particular rules.

Locations of the restrooms, stroller parking, family room, admission, and information desk are important considerations that will be dealt with carefully by the museum's architecture. It may be the first museum in China designed to promote local communities and cultures. Each of the museum's corners shall be created and designed to reach visitors' needs whether children' or their companions. The basic layout of the museum is like a target, or dartboard, with successive layers surrounding the museum's center. A rest space with low- height wall is set in the central, so if parents come with a stroller and a running child, they are able to have a seat with their stroller and watch their children playing in exhibit areas. If their children have trouble in exhibit areas, parents still can go and get their children, but still keep eyes on their stroller in the meantime. All the exhibit areas are designed as open spaces. There are no walls standing in the museum and blocking people' vision. Visitors are able to view every exhibit

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area from the central area. A team of volunteers and museum staff will be available to answer any questions and help with visitors. See details in the floor plan and sketches.

The museum offers a regular membership and a programming membership. The regular membership is paid annually, and only includes admission fee. The programming membership is more expensive, but includes admission fee, monthly programs, seasonal parents' conferences, and a gift bag. The programming membership owners will get a printed hand-book that gives twelve topics for monthly programs and information of four experts who will attend seasonal parents' conferences and give presentations. Not only the programming members can get new information on schools and children's activities, but people who are not programming members can also get useful information. An information center is set up for people who have a regular membership or who are first-time visitors to the museum to get new information about education and children's activities. The

museum's incorporation of the local government will broaden the mission of public education to include more informal educational programming that is more inclusive to the public.

Programs offered in the museums are divided by ages and topics, but all programs use the free choice style, based on "Learning through play". Parents are invited to join all programs, especially for young age group (0-5 year old); parents' participation is strongly recommended, in order to strengthen communications between children and parents. For preschool children (5-7 year old), natural science is strongly emphasized in order to activate children's curiosities about the nature and ecology in a context free of the stressful school style so familiar to Shanghai's student population. All programs are designed in a creative way and aim to help children think individually.

Children are always attracted by something colorful and in movement. A stage theater is designed for young age audiences

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including preschool children. It can play short movies no longer than 10-15 minutes, have volunteers dressed up to be story tellers, and also be a space for children's performances. An IMAX theater is set up for school-age group, who are the secondary audience of the museum. Considering the health of children's vision, 30 minutes are the maximum in IMAX. The major museums' target age groups are from 0-7, so the IMAX is for older school children that are not attracted by any other programs, so that they will enjoy the museum. It tries to create a good museum experience for them, and stimulate them to go to other museums, which fit their ages and offer knowledge at their level.

The Competition Room will be for family activities. It is called the Competition Room, but it is really more like a game room. It is a place for monthly family activities and school age children's performances. Shanghai is a very competitive city because of its high population, so people are already used to living with competitions. It is not bad thing. Parents like to compare their

children to others to see what their children need to improve on. Competitions make people move forward. The only requirement for entering the Competition Room is to come as family. Every activity held in the room will invite both parents and children to participate, so an activity turns into a game to a child, and he or she will not feel fear and stress. It will establish a model for competition more sensitive to children's actual interests and encourage parents to positively re-enforce the interests of their children. Children always feel safe when they stay close with their parents, then children will behave as themselves. It is an opportunity for parents to notice what their children are good at. Some children may react quickly; they can be sport stars in the future.

The content of exhibitions also needs to be well developed. Strengthening local culture is the major message passed around in the museum. Since Shanghai was a fishing town, one area will be designed as a fishing-town scene in order to stimulate children's

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imagination of how the city looked like 100 years ago, and to educate about the city's history in a big picture. A language communication corner is designed for children to communicate with each other in Shanghainese, which is mostly forbidden in schools. Sharing is another big idea throughout the museum's programs and exhibitions helping build stronger relationships between parents and children.

The Shanghai Children's Museum is designed for children. It is an idea borrowed from American Children's museology, but will not adopt the American model completely. The Shanghai Children's Museum has its typical style and form to educate children in a creative and enjoyable way in order to disseminate local culture, give children a great museum experience, and build audiences for museums in the future. The museum functions as a useful source and social place to influence the public in order to encourage the Shanghai museum field. Trying to create a bridge and get a healthy balance between formal education and museum

field is a further reason for having a great cultural children's museum in the city.

What impact will Shanghai Children's Museum have on its society and relationship to its past? Can the Shanghai Children's Museum foster a stronger museum culture for generations to come in Shanghai? What role does the Shanghai Children's Museum play in museum community and in Shanghai's society?

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