Engaging undergraduates in museum experiences

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My focus today: first 15 minutes

• My background & caveat (UG)
• Informal science education
• Museums and objective knowledge
• Classroom activities—”field trips”
• Non-classroom settings
  – Nature and process of science
  – Paleo field work
  – Collections-based activities & research
  – Exhibit and public program development
  – ISE research (evaluation)
• Discussion (I’ll be a facilitator)
Informal science education

• Museums, science centers, zoos, aquaria, botanical parks, nature centers, national parks, etc.
• Wide range of target audiences
• Many educational principles of formal education
  – Inquiry-based learning
  – Different learning styles or modalities
  – Web-based social learning
• Why should you use these in your courses?
Museums and objective knowledge

• Why should students know and understand museums?
• **Objective** knowledge
Why do people come to museums?

1. See the real stuff
2. To interact (touch)
3. To talk with experts
4. Social experience
   • Peers, families, etc.

(Not—to read text panels)

These same attractors will also engage your students.
Classroom activities—field trips

• Most visitors do not understand that the core of museums are their collections

• New trend towards open storage as part of exhibit

Darwin Centre, London

FLMNH
Non-classroom settings--Nature and process of science --Paleo field work
Collections-based activities & research
Exhibit development (real & cyber)

Megalodon: Largest shark that Ever lived
ISE research (evaluation)

Front-end

Summative
Public programs

In museum: Tastes, Tunes & Treasures

School outreach
Fairfax VA 2008
Why involve undergraduates in museums?

- Diversifies their experience from “normal” classroom and university programs
- Involves them in different kinds of research and activities
- Gets them turned on to, and comfortable with, museums
- Good “broader impact” synergy
Partnerships

• Don’t be afraid to ask your local museum or science center to collaborate
• Many are happy to get involved in partnerships (e.g., summer internships)
• Many programs: e.g., REU
• Contact point: Outreach/educator
Discussion (I’ll be a facilitator)
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• Do you have a museum, nature, or science center close?
• How have you partnered with it to be a teaching & learning resource?
• What innovative museum programs have you seen?
• What novel programs have yet to be developed?
• What else?