

COMP3900 Assignment 1

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Tiange WANG
U5715141

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1.The description of the exhibit

It is well-known that the National Museum of Australia, which is established in 1980, is a historical place for people to review the history and explore the lifestyle of the ancient people, animals and plants. Therefore, I decided to visit the museum on July 29th. After browsing the map, I noticed that there are 6 permanent galleries, and one of them impressed me extremely is called Old New Land.



Figure 1. The appearance of the Old New Land gallery

The Old New Land gallery is divided into 3 parts --- Encountering Australia, Living with the land and Understanding Australia, which represents the aboriginal people's and European settlers' life, wild animal in history and natural environment respectively. The entire exhibit demonstrates aspects of people's relationship to the land for visitors by the display of specimens of animals and plants, remains of living goods in the past and various models of disaster prevention facilities.

I chose the wildlife specimens in the Old New Land gallery as the described exhibit due to a childhood dream. When I was a child, I always listened stories of Australian aboriginal and traditional and unique wildlife by broadcast, TV and Internet. Regretfully, I never had a chance to see them with my own eyes, even the specimens. Hence, I must catch this precious chance. When I came out from the Circa rotating theatre, a medium-size platypus specimen jumped into my eyes. My dream came true! I was so excited that spending almost an hour browsing the exhibits in this gallery.



Figure 2. The specimen of platypus

As I introduced above, there are 6 permanent galleries showing in the National Museum of Australia which called Landmarks, Journeys, First Australians, Eternity, Old New Land and Circa. They severally describe the historical places, interactions with the world, aborigines' life, how Australians deal with the war and gained victory, the environment in the past and the variations of aspects in the history. Meanwhile, these elements contribute to create the theme of humanity, science, creativity and interconnect each other to show the brilliant history of human civilization, animals and plants.

2. Interaction with the exhibit

There is a small rotating theatre called Circa in the first floor entrance of the Museum. After I enjoyed the historical short film, I noticed the large board with ‘Old New Land’ and reminded me of the dream in the childhood. I focused on these two kinds of typical wild animals – platypus and kangaroo. They are made into animal specimens and preserved carefully in the glass cases. I stepped forward and keep eyes on the fur, head, claw and the tail of them, even the behavior and expression they made. There is a screen with different information which visitors want to know in front of the specimen of the platypus. I clicked lifestyle, environment and stories about them. Ridiculously, apart from the widely known knowledge that platypus is a kind of mammal, I think this cute animal is docile and nonpoisonous just like duck and beaver. However, the truth showed in the screen, which demonstrated that platypus is a few kinds of mammal which use poison as a defensive weapon, made me shocked indeed.

This attracted me a lot. I continued to click the screen and planned to explore why it is so poisonous and dangerous. The screen said that there is a hollow stab on the back of platypus and they use it to attack enemies when encountering threat, at the same time, the stab excretes 83 kinds of poison which is sufficient to kill any animals and people. Nevertheless, they always use the stab as a tool that showing the leading role when copulating. After that, I moved around the specimen and tried to find this specific stab on the back. When I noticed it, I felt horrible and shocked. Unfortunately, due to the problems of the light, I could not take a clear photo for the stab.

As far as I know, platypus is a kind of ancient mammal and it has appeared and lived about 25 million years. I was just curious why it did not become extinct without any evolution to adapt to the fickle environment during the long time. I tried to seek the answer but there is no related information shown in the screen. After I search in the Google, I realized that it is still a mystery and waited for the exploration and discovery by the scientists.



Figure 3. The specimen of kangaroo

3.Visitors' interaction

I use the Google Map to check the passenger volume and select Friday to visit as it said Friday has the busiest volume. Unfortunately, when I visited, I did not witness too many people. After the film in the Circa theatre ended, I followed two old couples and went to the Old New Land gallery. They were absorbed by the vivid specimens in the glass case. I observed that sparse visitors in the exhibit were old couples, families of three or four people and some students, including undergraduates and high school students in uniforms. Meanwhile, according to my field notes, I noticed that most families and undergraduates were foreign people because they talked to each other without using English.

By contrast with museums in my homeland, China, almost everyone was willing to read the instruction in front of the display carefully and quietly without touching, laughing or shouting. Old couples like introducing and explaining the exhibit, always the old men did this to the old ladies and old ladies either nodded or stared at the exhibit. Students often read the materials on the display and spent practically 2 minutes on each exhibit. Some of them used their smart phones to take photos, while others talked with each other in a whisper.



Figure 4. Old couples visited the sheep's skeleton



Figure 5. Students read the instruction.

For families, it seemed that their children were not interested in the specimens. They always rushed to the aboriginal exhibit area and came back to their parents. The parents usually observed the specimen and entered to the disaster prevention facilities or rooms to feel the amazement and greatness of them.

I chose to follow one Korean family. The little boy showed strong interests to the dinosaur skeleton and shouted 4 to 5 times ‘Mum, dad, I found the dinosaur!’. His parents firstly still stayed in front of the glass case of rabbit specimen and talked something. Then they walked slowly to the dinosaur skeleton display and said something in Korean. I did not understand any Korean but I guessed they were teaching some related knowledge to their child. The boy taught the touchscreen and click the dinosaur information while listening to his parents’ introduction. They stood in front of the display for a while and then walked forward to the European settler’s living goods exhibit.

4. Exhibit online

4.1 Exhibit on its website



Now showing in Canberra

Old New Land: Australia's People and Environment is a National Museum of Australia gallery exploring Australia's environmental history.

The Australian land mass was formed over many millions of years, yet the way we think and live in it is always evolving. Just as we shape the land, it shapes us, our experiences and our understanding.

The gallery's stories of land and people, climate, flora, fauna and ecology reveal how human histories are written on the land and how the continent's environments have shaped life in Australia.

Old New Land looks at three aspects of people's relationship to the land:

- Encountering Australia examines ways European settlers reacted to and sought to change Australian environments that were strange to them.
- Living with the Land deals with the development of different ways of life in response to the varied environments of Australia.
- Understanding Australia considers how knowledge of the land and its history has changed over time.



Three preserved bandicoot specimens from the Australian Institute of Anatomy collection.

Figure 6. National Museum of Australia website

The website (http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/old_new_land/home) clearly describes what they are now showing in the Old New Land area. It firstly demonstrates the summary of the exhibit, the background and what aspects it included in the exhibit. Then it divided the exhibit into 3 parts to describe -- Encountering Australia, Living with the land and Understanding Australia. In the Encountering Australia theme is how European settlers developed and changed Australia environment, including the life with Aboriginals. It illustrates how different wildlife responded to the various environment in Australia in the Living with the land theme.

Lastly, it uses one artist's artwork to describe how people adapted to the environment challenge in all ages.

4.2 Similar exhibit in other institutions

1. Western Australian Museum, Perth
(<http://museum.wa.gov.au/museums/perth>)

The website succinctly shows the appearance of the museum and what they are showing in the museum now, including mammal gallery, butterfly gallery and marine gallery. If I was a visitor and I wanted to search some descriptions or watch some videos, I can find what I want easily. In my opinion, it is an excellent method for the website to illustrate all the displays and panoramas by using the virtual map. People do not need to walk outside the room and only need a computer to finish visiting.

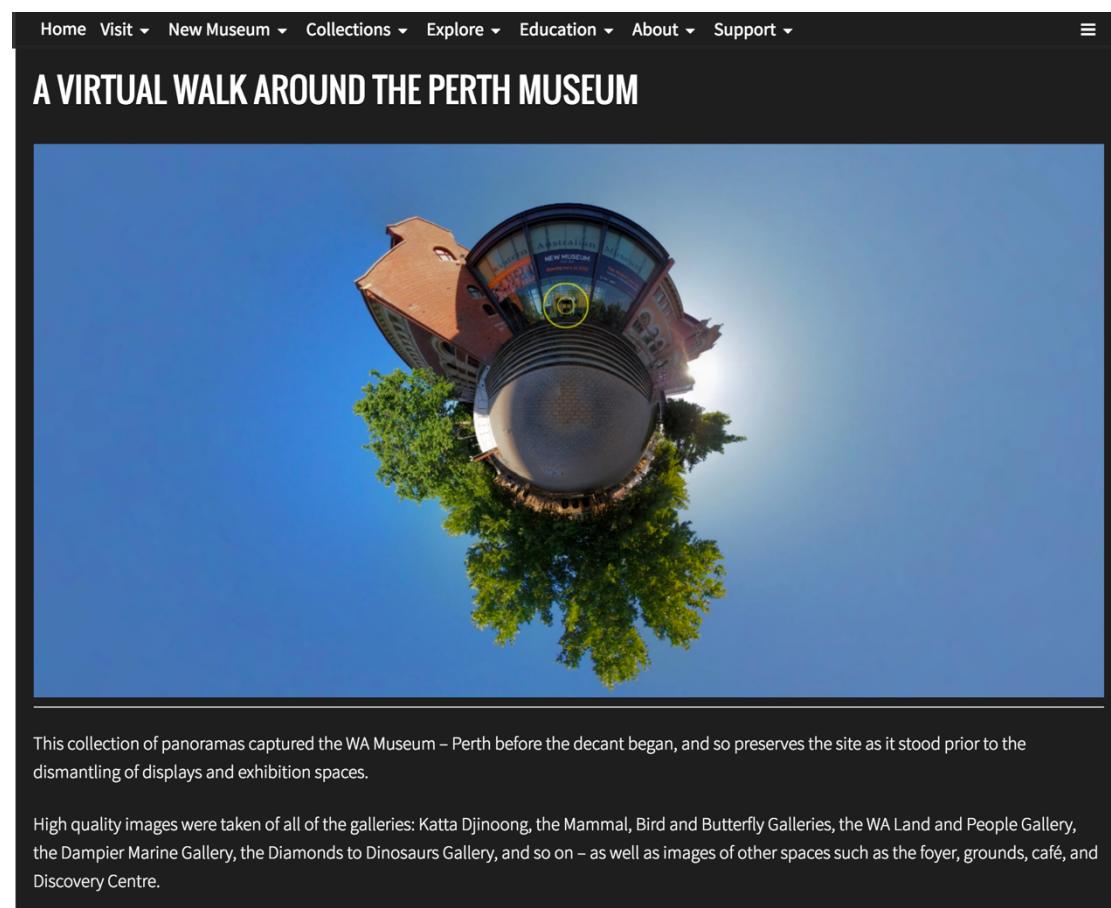


Figure 7. The virtual map function in WA Museum website

2. American Museum of Natural History
(<http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions>)

The website used traditional method and classification to demonstrate what specimen

or skeleton model are showing in the museum. Searching and browsing simplify for visitors. When you click each specific exhibit, you can see the introduction and what they suggest and highlight exhibits. Moreover, if you are interested in one of these exhibits, you can easily click the name and find relevant information you need. As far as I am concerned, the only shortcoming is the color of the website. Maybe black and white combination will be much better.



Dinosaurs Among Us

Dinosaurs Among Us examines how one group of dinosaurs evolved into fascinating living creatures we call birds.

March 18, 2016 - January 2, 2017



The Secret World Inside You

Explore the human microbiome and find out how rapidly evolving science is reshaping our ideas about human health.

November 7, 2015 - August 14, 2016



The Titanosaur

A cast of a 122-foot-long dinosaur is coming to the Museum in January 2016. The species is so new that it has not yet been formally named by the paleontologists who discovered it.

January 15, 2016 - January 1, 2020



Dark Universe

Narrated by Neil deGrasse Tyson, this Space Show celebrates the pivotal discoveries that have led us to greater knowledge of the structure and history of the universe and our place in it—and to new frontiers for exploration.

Exhibition Highlights



Dinosaur Nests, Eggs, and Babies

Some ancient dinosaurs made nests, laid eggs, and tended to their babies—just like today's birds and crocodiles.



Dinosaur Feathers

Scientists think that many dinosaur species sported primitive feathers—precursors to those birds use to fly, court mates, and more.



Dinosaur Brains and Lungs

New technology is revealing that the physiology and anatomy of dinosaurs and birds are more alike than once thought.



Dinosaur Bones, Beaks, and Claws

Modern birds still boast talons and hollow bones, callbacks to their evolutionary link to ancient dinosaurs.

Figure 8 & 9. The screenshot of American Museum of Natural History

5. Online representation

5.1 Idea Summary & Target audience

Based on my experience, in my opinion, visitors mostly consist of families with children, students and old couples. Thus, for children who are interested in wildlife or primitive life skeleton, I plan to add the classification of all wildlife and primitive life. In addition, selecting some typical or rare wildlife to make 3D models for children to click and explore on their computers.

Then, considering the eyesight problems of elderly people, I will create a magnifier function which is on the top right corner of the website for these particular people to search information they need more easily. Meanwhile, some of these people may have more serious vision problems. For this purpose, the website must have the artificial interpretation function, that is, the staff of museum recruit some volunteers to read some articles or introduction as recordings for preparation and take these recordings on the website. When elderlies fail to read words after using magnifier function, they may click this button and listen to the information.

Moreover, for students, if they do not have sufficient time to visit the museum due to busy work, they can use the virtual map on the website, which is similar with what the Western Australian Museum website shows. In order to expand the scope of knowledge, I intend to add some wildlife quiz for them and they can get 5 score for every correct answer and see who is best.

Lastly, the comment function is appropriate for people in all ages. They can leave the message to complain what the weaknesses of the exhibit are or give a big thumbs-up for whatever they like. These comments are actually helpful for other visitors and this is also a supervision for the museum. In addition, the share button will exist in the bottom right corner of the website for people who really like our website and are willing to share our website to their friends on any social medias, like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.

Therefore, the target audiences for this website are children, students and elderlies.

5.2 Important features

In my opinion, the online representation for wildlife specimens should satisfy many requirements, especially these 3 important features:

1. User-friendly interface

After I browsed many similar museum websites, I discovered almost every museum considered the user-friendly interface. ‘How to illustrate more comprehensively and more easily for visitors to click or find information they need.’ is a necessary aspect of considerations for every museum. Thus, in our website, we should adopt this precious idea and experience.

‘Convenience’ is our target. The website must be acceptable for people in different ages. As I introduced above, ‘3D model’, ‘artificial interpretation’, ‘virtual map’ and ‘comment and share function’ correspond to this purpose.

2. Videos & pictures

It is a general knowledge that in comparison to the boring words, people are willing to accept videos and pictures. Hence, videos and pictures and words should perform alternately in the article. When visitors want to browse quickly to explore the appearance of the wildlife, they can slide the website and find pictures and videos. There should be a large number of pictures to make our website more vivid and welcomed rather than an uninteresting dictionary or cyclopedia.

3. Multilingual system

According to my field notes, I noticed that most visitors were foreign people because they talked to each other without using English. Therefore, foreign language option in the website is an important function for most foreign people who visit our website. In addition, some language or specific words or sentences are hard to translate. For instance, some Chinese poems are hard to translate from Chinese character to English words due to the cultural difference. If forcibly translate into English, it may lose verve and artistic conception. For these specific words, the website provides the translation in the literal sense for visitors to understand the fundamental meaning and add the foreign language option for people who know the language to appreciate.

Besides, considering among the visitors, there exists a group of travelers. The website provides bilingual edition in the article and videos for them, which is similar with the movie subtitle.

I believe that these improvements will make the website become more welcomed and practical than other existing websites.

6. Discussion with friends

Firstly, I thought about the range of questions:

1. Comments on the website.

This is a general question for every interviewee as a guide.

2. The person's expectations on the website.

I want to know what I haven't considered after others' thoughts.

3. Whether sharing the website to their friends.

I want to test whether the share function is popular in the group of students.

4. Whether the three features are helpful.

To check if one of these feature is unnecessary.

Then, I invited my friend Terry Xu (ANU undergraduate student, Bachelor of Information technology) to join the interview. Here is the note I wrote in my notebook.

M (Tiange Wang, hereinafter to be referred as 'M'): What do you think about my planned website?

Terry Xu (Hereinafter to be referred as 'T'): I ever browsed your website design in the course COMP2410. So I think the background, the color assortment and the typesetting are not problems. As a student, sometimes I do have no time to visit the museum. So I think the virtual map and 3D model are really amazing thought. And knowledge quizzes are also novel from other existing websites.

M: What are your expectations on the website?

T: I don't want to see too many words in the article or introduction. So I prefer to videos and pictures. The background color is solemn, black or grey is better. If possible, some light music should be included. Apart from the music, your website is satisfied with my expectation.

M: Would you like to share this website if you really like it? On Facebook, or other apps.

T: Well, I will consider to post your website on the Facebook. But in other apps, I don't think so because I usually use other apps to send SMS or chat with others.

M: After browsing 3 features of my opinion, what do you think about them? Are they really helpful for people in different groups?

T: Your thought is really good for people in different ages and I think they are helpful for different people indeed. But I do hope the website has some light music as the background music. You know, sometimes people may feel bored when reading long article or watching long time videos.

M: Well, that's a good idea. Thank you for interviewing. Have a good day!

7. Improvement

Terry is a crazy fan of music. Although he thought my website is good and only weakness is lack of music, my website is still not very perfect. I should follow this idea and add background music to the website since Terry's idea is right and this improvement really avoid people feeling bored during they read articles or watch videos.

And the number of interviewee is only one, which means the only one idea is not worth referencing. I should invite more people in different ages to interview and write down their opinions. Unfortunately, since I plan to do the interview lately, I do not have sufficient time to interview other people except my classmates and university students. Hence, for the part of others' comments, I keep my idea on the website and follow Terry's idea to add background music function.

In addition, I think my interview questions should be improved.

Original question:

After browsing 3 features of my opinion, what do you think about them? Are they really helpful for people in different groups?

After improved is:

As a student, what do you think the knowledge quiz and virtual map functions?

Because the interviewee is a student, he or she may not realize the feeling of little children or elderly people.

Meanwhile, I should add these two questions for little children or elderlies:

1. As a child, what do you think the 3D models?

2. As an elderly, what do you think the magnifier function and artificial interpretation?

These two questions are faced forward to target audiences. And I will get more accurate answers and ideas since these are their true feeling not imagination.