Reading Guide,   
day 1, Unit III: Public Engagement

Because this is a *natural history* collections class, I think it most appropriate to **cover science learning and public engagement with science**, not just visitor engagement at any museum.

We start this unit with a reading about learning science in informal environments. We start here, because it brings several important issues to the forefront: (1) the difference between formal and informal settings for learning. That is, museums, nature centers, science centers etc. are informal settings, or, more precisely, “designed settings” and learning there is different in important ways from schools, which are called formal learning settings. Other informal settings include TV, books for the public, etc., but these examples are not designed settings. That is, designed settings are a **subclass** of informal learning settings. (2) science learning is reasonably well-defined and researched and this report presents that portion of the literature that applies to science learning in designed settings. You need a solid base in the traditional literature around engaging learners at museums and particularly, in science learning, before I can introduce you to the revolutionary ideas about participation, rather than mere engagement, in a museum and the new in-the-last-two-years community organizing around science learning, communication and engagement.

SHOW COVER PAGE This is a report of the national research council of the national academies of science, who are self-claimed advisers to the nation on science, engineering and medicine. The council set up a committee of 14 experts in education, psychology, media and informal education to examine the potential of non-school settings for science learning.

🡪this is not an easy chapter to read and it is long, so this will be a very thorough reading guide.

🡪this chapter does not summarize things into nice easy-to-digest lists, so I will tell you what lists to make—DO IT!

In this incredibly long report, they have developed a framework that articulates science-specific capabilities supported by informal environments. The idea is that a person’s understanding and capabilities in science are a complex woven web of experiences in both formal and informal settings. The components of this web can be broken down into six categories, which they call strands. Keep the picture of a web in your head so that when they talk about strands, that term makes sense to you.