The Computer Museum Board of Directors Meeting

November 3, 1989

Discussion Questions for Education Planning

(See also attached background paper.)

a. Should we target a specific youth audience (preschool through grade 3, grades 4-12, college, "at-risk" versus general)?

b. Should we aim primarily toward adults and only incidentally include children and their teachers and parents?

c. Should we focus on education about computing in general or on educational computing as our key topic?

d. Should we revamp existing programs and buttress them (provide missing pieces and catch up) or should we concentrate on adding new programs?

e. Should we show what's far out or try to stay just "two blocks ahead of the parade"?

Summary of Education Plan Priorities, 1989-1990

With the goal of educating the widest possible public, including the education community, about computers, the Education Department has four major activity areas:

1. Internal operations (interpreter training, tours).
2. Special education-focused programs in the Museum (teacher training, presentations, Kids Computer Fair, Resource Center).
3. Outreach (programs and presentations to external audiences).
4. General education about computers for the lay public (exhibit support, publications, videotapes, lecture series).

Priority one is to reinforce, improve, and expand our basic ongoing responsibilities:

interpreter training
school visits/tours
public tours/programs
special events/programs
exhibit support

Priority two is to consolidate and enhance activities recently begun:

teacher training
presentations on computer topics
Resource Center
outreach programs
Education Committee planning
education community networking
partnership programs
equity/"underserved" activities
college liaisons
volunteer development
staff education
public lecture series

Priority three is to undertake (over the longer term) new activities:

education lecture series
funded internships
publications complementing exhibits
videotapes of galleries and computing topics

Priority one can be accomplished with existing staff.

We are seeking funding so as to add staff to pursue Priority two.
The first four activities will take funding precedence over the rest.

Priority three will need support and new staff but may have to wait.

Background for Computer Museum Education Plan (1989-1990)

Goals

The Computer Museum is, first and foremost, an educational institution, and educational goals and perspectives inform every aspect of our exhibits and programs. In keeping with the educational mission of the Museum, the Education Department has defined a manageable number of objectives and activities for this year, choosing carefully among the many possible alternatives. Broadly, our goals are these:

1. Drawing on the full resources of the Museum, to educate the widest possible public about the history, technology, and applications of computers and their benficial impact on society, the economy, business and industry, and education.

2. To fill the knowledge gaps of Museum visitors and audiences and to demystify computers for those who lack technical background so as to foster their enthusiasm for computer use.

3. To serve as an acknowledged resource for the education community: professional associations, schools and colleges, teachers, researchers, administrators, students of all ages, school boards, and concerned parents; to inform them about what is possible today in computer-based instruction.

4. To improve Museum operations through recruitment and systematic training of high-quality interpreter staff and volunteers.

Questions

In trying to set priorities and assign our limited resources, we have asked ourselves the following questions:

a. Should we target a specific youth audience (preschool through grade 3, grades 4-12, college, "at-risk" versus general)?

b. Should we aim primarily toward adults and only incidentally include children and their teachers and parents?

c. Should we focus on education about computing in general or on educational computing as our key topic?

d. Should we revamp existing programs and buttress them (provide missing pieces and catch up) or should we concentrate on adding new programs?

e. Should we show what's far out or try to stay just "two blocks ahead of the parade"?

Recommendations of the Education Committee

At its October 13 meeting, the Museum's Education Committee considered these questions in relation to educational needs and our goals, rather than first factoring in available resources, and agreed on the following:

Our primary youth audience will be children in middle school and high school as they are most able to benefit from the Museum's offerings at a critical time in their education.

b. We will reach for all ages but particularly young people and adults who are still uninformed about computing; most of our special programs will be for youth.

c. Some combination of education about computing as a whole and educational applications in particular will be provided to all audiences but especially to young visitors.

d. We will upgrade existing educational offerings first and add reinforcing programs gradually as we can fund and staff these.

e. We will try to do a bit of both--what's far out and what's just ahead.

Strategies
Here are specific strategies we will use to help us meet our goals:

1. For the general public

Create with other departments of the Museum a range of targeted lecture/presentation series that will educate the general public about many aspects of computers--history and evolution, technology, general and special applications, new developments, social impact, relation to other societal forms and products, educational and business uses, the future.

Set up an educational presentations series in which key figures from the world of educational computing present their views and programs for a lay audience.

Establish an outreach program that will offer presentations and programs at sites within this region, such as schools, councils on aging, community centers, agencies serving the handicapped, colleges, teacher centers, subsidized child care centers and day camps, collaboratives, adult education centers, school district collaboratives, state regional centers, meetings of professional groups and teachers.

Develop presentations and print/video materials in support of Museum exhibits--background sheets on displayed technologies and applications, exportable packages, and outreach presentations. To create videotapes that can supplement exhibits, serve as introductions before visits to the Museum, or substitute for visits for remote or homebound individuals or organizations.

Plan toward an income-producing publication program (print, video) for the Museum.

2. For Museum visitors

Develop lecture/presentations, special programs, videotapes, and publications as above.

Work with exhibit staff of the Museum to enhance existing exhibits and contribute an educational perspective to exhibits in development and planned exhibits. To provide educational materials in support of all exhibits and programs to complement their purpose for visitors.

Upgrade the pilot Resource Center so as to allow the general public, as well as educators, students, and parents to experience the latest in hardware and software applications available for educational use.

3. For the Education Community

Develop the Resource Center, presentations, and publications as above.

Institute teacher-training programs that build on the exhibits and provide an introduction to the Museum and to computer literacy. To provide teachers with what they need to go back to their classrooms and work with their students or to incorporate a visit to the Museum productively into their curriculum.

Expand visitations to the Museum by schools, colleges, and other educational agencies and their students, staff, and faculty, and locate means for supporting their visits and providing special programming and membership benefits for them.

Network with education organizations to spread the image and mission of the Museum and its programs and have the Museum recognized as an active educational resource to such institutions.

Form partnerships with other nonprofit agencies and with school systems with the intention of collaborating on proposals to deliver informal learning to audiences not otherwise served and not now reached by the Museum. To become part of the national funding picture for educational programs.

Define a systematic role for the Education Committee with individual responsibilities for willing members.

4. Improving Museum operations

Design and carry out an educational program for Museum interpreters that will enable us to provide better service to visitors, offer useful tours and presentations, deliver needed outreach programs, and recruit and retain high-level staff for interpreter functions. To provide a comparable educational program to all Museum staff.

Establish a working volunteer system, with oversight, so that we can incorporate volunteers from schools, colleges, businesses, and special groups, such as retired people, into Museum activities as needed. A focus might be tours, special events and presentations, outreach, and targeted planning.

Develop and put in place a funded internship program that will provide training in all aspects of educational computing and background in computers to students of all age levels.

10/18/89 ALN

Education Committee, 1989-1990 (mailing addresses)

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FYI

*Love to see you
or will report.
Adeline
Sept. 29*

September 22, 1989

To the members of the newly constituted Education Committee:

The school year has begun, and several of you are new to the education
efforts of the Museum. Welcome. We will meet regularly, either monthly or
bimonthly, depending on what you decide at our first meeting. Because of
our teacher-members' commitments, the Schools Advisory Group met last
year first thing in the morning, and we propose to start meeting this
year at the same time, subject to subsequent review. Our opening task
will be to brief you about our plans and create an agenda for future
meetings.

The first meeting will be here at the Museum on Friday, October
13 (it seemed like a good omen) at 8:30 a.m. (If enough of you tell me
you can't make that date, I'll reschedule for October 20.) I'm eager to
get started and also to have a plan in place to report to the Board at
the November 3 meeting. We'll meet for up to three hours (including a
brief tour of new exhibits).

Please let me know as soon as you read this whether you will come on the
13th and whether you will need parking in front of the Museum. You will
enter through the Children's Museum, pick up your prearranged parking
slip at the Security Desk, and then take the main elevator to the fifth
floor conference room in the auditorium, where we'll have coffee.

We had a terrific group last year. Hal Shear and Jonathan Rotenberg from
the Museum Board will, we hope, be joined this year by our new Board
member, Seymour Papert.

Of the practitioners, we hope to hold onto Alan November (Wellesley
Schools and MassCUE), Beth Lowd (Lexington Schools and ETAC), Marilyn
Gardner (Boston Schools), Bob Tinker (TERC), and Art Bardige
(Learningways). We have asked Joyce Tobias and Jane Manzelli (Brookline
Schools), Martin Huntley (Southeast Collaborative and MassCUE), and Dick
Ruopp (formerly president of Bank Street College, now TERC, ETAC, and ?)
to join us. If everyone can arrange to serve on the Committee, we'll have
a powerful and varied group of education experts to help us carry out our
mission. We'll reintroduce ourselves when we first meet, and I'll have
materials for you then.

Natalie Rusk, our brand new Education Coordinator will be at the meeting,
and so will I. OLiver Strimpel, Acting Executive Director, may be able to
join us. Meanwhile, have a joyous autumnal equinox.

Adeline Naiman
Director of Education
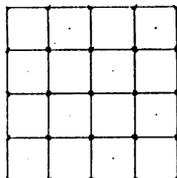
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