

Tips for Museum-Research Partnerships

RESEARCHERS:

- Talk with potential museum partners about the institution's mission and the teams' goals; Listen for topics that overlap with your research interests & expertise.
- Recognize the professional training, strengths, and expertise of museum staff.
- Approach the partnership with humility and open-mindedness.
- Be respectful of the museum's significant goals and compromise when they interfere with research goals.
- Become a regular part of the team; staying in contact prevents misunderstandings, and resolving problems early minimizes negative impact.
- Find additional ways to contribute to museum partners' goals – e.g., providing research articles that are difficult to access outside of universities.

EXAMPLE: Museum educators and designers are skilled in presenting information to the public in clear and informative ways. As the Living Lab project shows, they can help train graduate and undergraduate students in these important skills.

MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS:

- Talk with potential research partners about their expertise and ask what they would hope to gain from a museum partnership.
- Clarify the mission and goals of the museum and your team; Be honest about values that cannot be compromised.
- Be flexible and find ways to compromise when you can – the results can be valuable for your visitors and the field.

EXAMPLE: A museum with the strong value of providing equal access to exhibits for all families might not want to compromise by having the researchers block off access except for research participant families.

RESOURCES:

Sobel, D. M., & Jipson, J. L. (2016). *Relating research and practice: Cognitive development in museum settings*. New York: Psychology Press.

Haden, C. A. (2010). Talking about science in museums. *Child Development Perspectives*, 4(1), 62-67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2009.00119.x>

Callanan, M. (2012). Conducting cognitive developmental research in museums: Theoretical issues and practical considerations. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 13(2) 137-151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15248372.2012.666730>