




What Did You Learn?

An Analysis of Inquiry-Based
Learning in Museum Education
and Visitor Interaction in *Object
Project*



What is Inquiry-Based Learning?

- “Free-choice” learning based on visitors’ interest
- Object-focused → using primary sources and analyzing objects with multiple senses
- Conversational → inviting questions that are experience- rather than knowledge-based



See, Think, Wonder



- What do you notice about the object?
What are some of its visual or tactile characteristics?
- What do you think about the object?
Is there anything about it that interests you?
- What do you wonder about the object? How could we learn more about it?

Defining Success

- Program “victories” vary depending on the visitor
- For example
 - Small children
 - People with disabilities
 - Visitors new to the NMAH/museums in general



Evaluating *Object Project*

- “Everyday things that changed everything”
- Refrigeration, Bicycles, Household Hits, and Ready to Wear Clothing
- Open-ended exhibit with few labels and many interactives



Everyday Things that Changed Everything

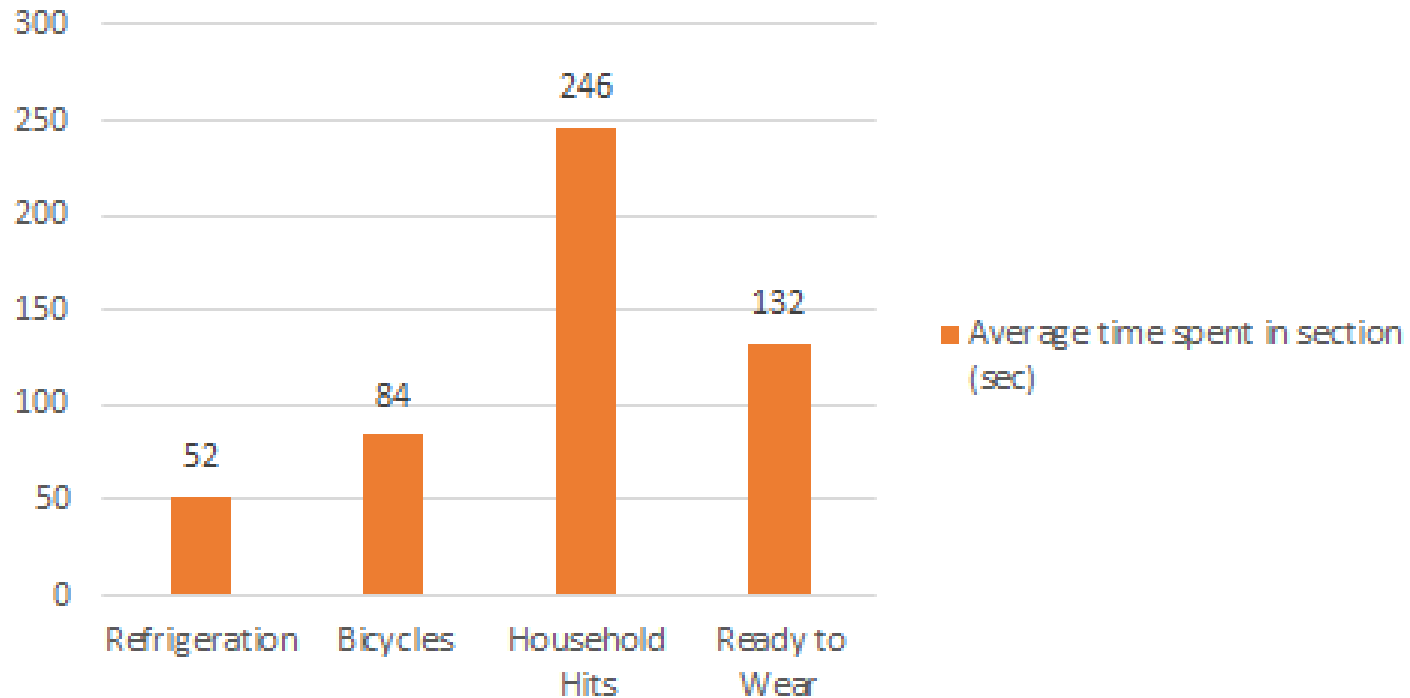


Does It Work?

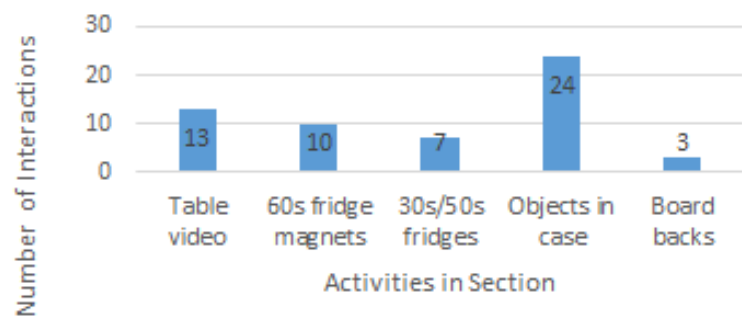
- Household Hits and Ready to Wear significantly more popular than Refrigeration or Bicycles
- Popular interactives include “The Price is Right,” Try It On, and Talking Objects
- People still enjoy looking at the objects themselves



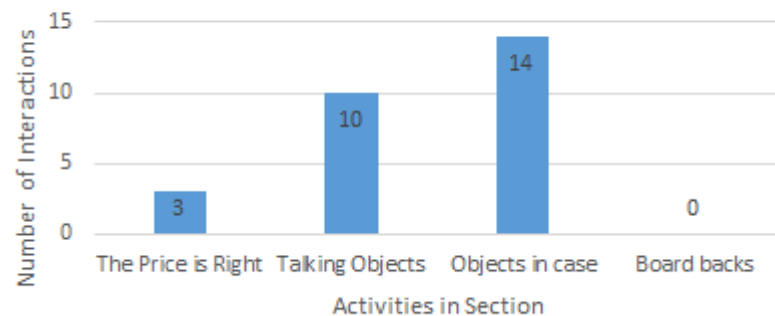
Time Spent in Object Project (sec)



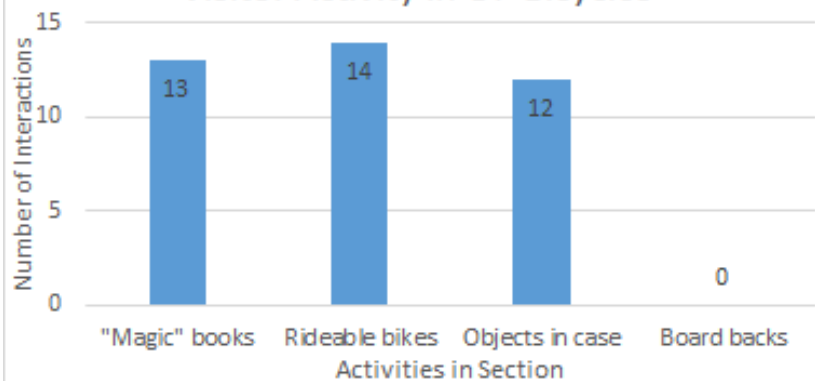
Visitor Activity in OP Refrigeration



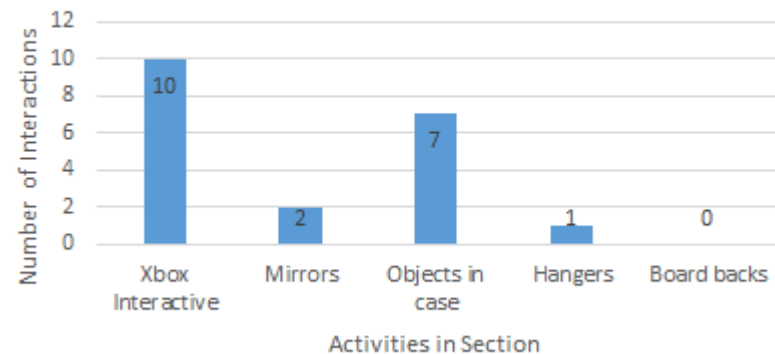
Visitor Activity in OP Household Hits



Visitor Activity in OP Bicycles



Visitor Activity in OP Ready to Wear



What Doesn't Work?

- Board backs



Conclusion

- Few ways to quantifiably “prove” inquiry-based learning works, but interactions and observations speak for themselves
- Spreading technique to other/smaller museums → how does facilitation change in different environments?

