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Hypatia Newsletter #2

**Hypatia**  
PROJECT

## **Inclusion: A new priority for museums and science centres**

In the past, it has been easy for us and many of our white, European, middle-class peers to consider museums and science centres as welcoming and inclusive places. When we enter a science centre gallery with all its hands-on exhibits featuring scientific principles just waiting to be discovered, it is tantalisingly easy to think that these spaces extend the same open invitation to everyone. But, as research shows, it is becoming more and more clear that museums and science centres do not afford discovery on the same terms to everyone. In fact, many members of the public are excluded from participating in museums and science centres before they even reach the entrance.

**"...it is becoming more and more clear that museums and science centres do not afford discovery on the same terms to everyone."**

Among the many mechanisms that can exclude people from visiting science centres and museums are distance of travel (for those living in rural areas), entrance fees (for low-income members of the public), or subject area (for those uninterested in science). But even more subtle exclusion mechanisms are also at stake. This is evident in the continued, widespread struggle to attract more girls to science - and also from a number of studies that have identified gender exclusion mechanisms at work in museums and science centres

Research shows that we may be building gender exclusion mechanisms directly into the design of our science exhibits and environments. One example is the discovery pedagogy of some science centres that may particularly appeal to extrovert personalities who enjoy experimentation, competitions and risk-taking. In other words, discovery pedagogy may imply a certain kind of visitor, and exclude others. And this is important, because even if the visitors who feel excluded manage to somehow overcome the difficulties they encounter, they may still walk away from their museum experience with a reinforced belief that museums are 'not for them'.

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carefully who the **implied visitor** is in our activities and environments, and how we can move beyond those implications to attract and support a wider range of science interests and aspirations. But of course, the rationale for examining and alleviating exclusion mechanisms in museums and science centres goes far beyond the project Hypatia.

**"...being inclusive means examining closely the institutional assumptions that are made about visitors, and moving away from any idealised visitor profiles that may be implicit or explicit in these assumptions."**

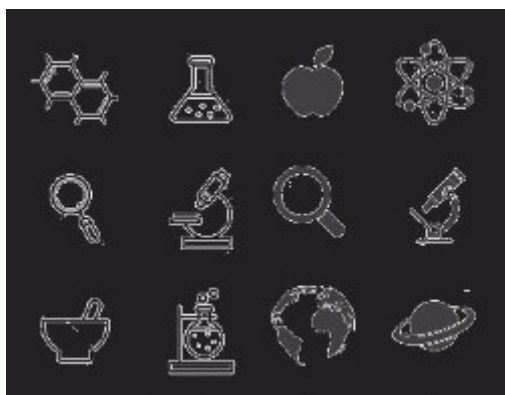
Museums and science centres are, above all, for the public. For this reason, many of these institutions are in the process of renewing their perspective on what it means to be (gender)-inclusive. However, this task far from straightforward. It is not enough to simply remove barriers (perceived or otherwise) to visiting; being inclusive means examining closely the institutional assumptions that are made about visitors, and moving away from any idealised visitor profiles that may be implicit or explicit in these assumptions. Becoming a science education institution that is truly inclusive to the broad public is neither easy nor simple, but it is certainly worth striving for.

#### Further reading:

Achiam, M., & Sølberg, J. (2016). Practices of today and visions of tomorrow: New directions for science centres and museums. Spokes, 15, 1-8.

Dawson, E. (2014). "Not designed for us": How informal science learning environments socially exclude low-income, minority ethnic groups. Science Education.

Sandell, R. (1998). Museums as agents of social inclusion. Museum Management and Curatorship, 17(4), 401-418.



### Gender Inclusion in Science Activities

In Hypatia, we have developed a total of 15 focus questions for science educators in the gender-inclusion optimization of science education activities. The optimized activities are in the process of being tested, and we look forward to hearing from the partners on their progress! [Read more](#)



### Gender experts - what drives them?

We interviewed two members of Hypatia's Gender Panel to find out what made them become interested in gender research, and what they see as Hypatia's greatest strengths. [Read their responses here!](#)



## Events

From **15 to 20 to September 2016**, in Brussels, **Expect Everything** we were at [EUCYS 2016](#). We were very happy to share with all these amazing young scientists some of our activities.

On **25 September** Hypatia's Estonian hub, [AHHA Science Centre](#) hosted two events open to the public: **Science Bite: Brunch with a Researcher & Youth Talk**. The same night, in Israel, the [Bloomfield Science Museum](#) presented **Wearable Technologies**, an open workshop developed by [Leonardo da Vinci Museum in Milano](#). The workshop, presented as part of Researchers' Night activities, was guided by two members of the Hypatia youth panel. Besides these activities, [Experimentarium](#) has run "Science and Stereotypes" based on 2 of the [Universcience](#) activities for 70 young people. Noesis and [Science Gallery](#) have been very busy with the launching of Science Gallery's Youth Advisory Panel "The Young Leos" and [Noesis](#) launch of their National Hubs. On 1 October, Science Gallery will present the project at [Féilte 2016](#), a festival of innovation in Irish education.

For more information on these and other events taking place in the context of the Hypatia project, visit our [Agenda page](#).



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