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John H. Falk, Lynn D. Dierking

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Learning from Museums

*Visitor
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Meaning*

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Lynn D. Dierking



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Why do people go to museums and what do they learn there? What roles can museums serve in a learning community? How can museums facilitate more effective learning experiences? John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking investigate these questions in *Learning from Museums*. Synthesizing theories and research from a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, education, anthropology, neuroscience and museum research, Falk and Dierking explain the nature and process of learning as it occurs within the museum context and provides advice on how museums can create better learning environments. Visit the authors' web page

Those interested in visitor studies and informal educational environments will find much to engage them and to think about in this book and I expect to see many quotations from it in student work. (Paulette McManus, (University College, London) Visitor Studies Today!)John Falk and Lynn Dierking . . . put to profitable effect their many years of familiarity with the field, including long service at the Smithsonian. This is a splendid book where the pages themselves unequivocally link the concepts of fun and learning. The writing is dense but never dry, didactic but never dogmatic. . . .The book's careful organization makes it easy and pleasant to read, and the key concepts placed succinctly at the end of each chapter enable the hurried and harried professionals to retrieve information without having to remember page numbers. (Jane Manaster Museline, (Texas Association Of Museums))John Falk and Lynn Dierking have been talking to museum visitors and conducting research on the visiting experience for over twenty years. . . . *Learning from Museums* . . . elaborates topics such as museums and the individual, communities of learners, documenting learning, improving the visitor experience, museums in society, and the future of museums. Visits are both learning and fun, choice of what and when to learn is intrinsic to the museum experience, conversation is a primary mechanism of knowledge construction . . . and meaning is elaborated by subsequent experiences. . . . Each chapter finishes with conclusions, key points, and very extensive references: very accessible stuff!. . . When museums take advantage of visitor research they . . . acknowledge the importance of good communication. The message of *Learning from Museums* must be understood by all concerned with that fundamental aim of museums: the increase and diffusion of understanding. (Des Griffin, The Australian Museum, Sydney Museum National)In *Learning from Museums*, [the authors] embed practical issues in the broader theoretical and research contexts. With their help we can begin to understand more about what is really going on during the learning process in general, information that can then be applied to the specifics of museums. For once we have a better understanding of how museum visitors make sense of these experiences, then we can make more informed decisions about how to create the best possible exhibitions and programs for them. (Michael Spock, (University of Chicago) From The Foreword)About the AuthorJohn H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking are founders and directors of the Institute for Learning Innovation in Annapolis, Maryland. Their books include *Lessons without Limit*, *The Museum Experience*, and *Free-Choice Science Education*.