

Language science research and engagement at a language museum

What?

Newly funded collaborative project (9/2021) to engage Planet Word visitors in language science research

Why?

- Engage visitors in domain of science often overlooked in the public imagination (language arts → language science enthusiasts!)
- Diversify participants who contribute data to studies
- Provide training in research & science communication to a diverse group of students across a range of institutions, including MSIs, *broadening participation* in STEM
- Lower barrier to entry for other language researchers interested in public-facing research

Where?

Planet Word, a new museum housed in DC's historic Franklin School, with a focus on *literacy*, *language arts* (literature, humor, oratory), & *language science* (language acquisition, world languages, forensic linguistics)

How?

- Iteratively design museum-friendly studies and educational activities across a range of topics + methods
- Student training via course offered to any DC-area consortium school student
- Develop and disseminate best practices in public-facing research design and engagement to other researchers



Example topics

- Why is it harder to understand strangers than people we know?
- Do we think differently when reading a text vs. formal writing?

As we begin: How to balance opportunities + challenges across all stakeholders?

Language researchers

Opportunities

- Collect data from diverse participants, in more real-world environment
- Raise profile of language sciences among public

Challenges

- Compromise on control of research conditions
- Keep scientific rigor of studies while holding interest of visitors across all age groups

Planet Word museum

Opportunities

- Serve as active research site and have access to scientists in the museum's field
- Provide value added for visitors, who can contribute to language science and see how language science knowledge is created

Challenges

- Compromise on control of entire visitor experience

Undergrad/grad students

Opportunities

- First-hand practice in research, science communication, especially for students with less access and who are underrepresented in the field
- Gain skills that cross over from academia into other areas

Challenges

- Feel comfortable with learning-by-doing
- Fit into regular coursework

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