

MUSEUMS AND EDUCATION IN GEOLOGY

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The development of electronic media (especially television and Internet) led to psychological changes - the world is seen differently - and to sociological disruptions, causing new behavioural responses. They brought about new aesthetic styles and the sense of a world without barriers. However, sociologically, the two media are significantly different: whereas television operates within the "ideological notion of nuclear family in its domestic setting" (Meyrowitz, 1985), Internet fosters an individualistic, *nonplace* attitude, lacking actual physical interaction.

The way electronic media carry information is fast, efficient and pervasive. Furthermore, such media are so dynamically interactive with events that they become intervening elements, if not controlling factors of the very same events. Therefore, McLuhan's suggestion (1964) that education should become a civil defense against media fallout gains momentum.

If museums are to play an important role in science education they must be prepared for the new challenges regarding public expectations, and it must be taken into account that the new sociological setting strongly influences the way people now interacts with museums.

Perhaps it is time now for a reappraisal of the two museum approaches: the traditional museum and the science centre. Piaget's ideas and related constructivists strategies demoted the classical museum while fostering the new, 'hands-on' approach. Yet, their complementary strengths/weaknesses show that both approaches are valuable. This is especially the case of geological museums, given the time and space scales at which most representative geological phenomena occur, and the difficulties in designing reusable analogue models.