

# **THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF MUSEUMS**

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The Educational Value of Museums by Louise Connolly

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**LOUISE CONNOLLY**

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VALUE OF  
MUSEUMS**



## **The Educational Value of Museums**

# The Educational Value of Museums

By  
**Louise Connolly**  
Edited and with an Introduction by  
**J. C. Dana**

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

Newark, N. J.  
The Newark Museum Association  
1914

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## Introduction

We should try to develop, here in Newark, a group of museums, in the fields of art, science and industry, of the modern type. Our Newark museums, that is, should be of immediate practical value to Newark citizens, old and young. They should appeal to all of us, to the newer people as well as the older. They should reflect our industries, be stimulating and helpful to our workers, and promote an interest here and elsewhere in the products of our own shops. They should be the handmaidens of our schools, helping to discover among our thousands of young people those tastes and talents which may lead them to such accomplishments as will bring profit, credit and civility to our city. Our museums should do these things in all the fields they touch: in fine art, in the applied arts, in industry, in the mere making of honest goods which is itself a fine art, and in pure and applied science.

In thus describing in broad terms the kinds of museums we should try to create here, I speak with considerable assurance. But, while we who are daily at work upon our very modest museum beginnings feel quite sure that we know in a general way toward what end we should proceed, we find it difficult to discover the details with which we may most wisely first concern ourselves. This difficulty was most keenly felt when we faced, a year ago, the fact that our collections and cases were growing very rapidly, that we had one more small room only into which we could expand and that we must there, so far as possible, suggest to the public the character of the work we believe the association should take up as it grows and expands in later years—the work, that is, which lies outside and beyond

the obviously proper fields of sculpture, painting, pure and applied science, already outlined briefly but plainly by our very small permanent exhibits.

Much study and many discussions had led us, as I have said, to certain general conclusions as to the proper treatment of this last available space. But we lacked assurance in details, just as we lacked assurance concerning the details of the whole scheme of modern, live, popular, teaching and inspiring museums which we had long before agreed should be the aim of this association.

At this crisis I was fortunately able to send Miss Louise Connolly, educational expert of the Free Public Library, on a tour of inspection of some fifteen or twenty of the museums of the country, and to get from her a report on the very questions we were facing.

Miss Connolly, while not a specialist in any branch of art or science or industry, has knowledge of scholarly quality in all three, and of considerable depth in the last two, having taken two degrees in science, worked as a student in the National Museums, and assisted the late Dr. Henry Gannett in the writing of his *Commercial Geography*. She has also been for years a teacher and superintendent in the public schools of New Jersey. And she was trained under the late W. B. Powell, Superintendent of the Washington Schools, in such employment of museums and government agencies for the education of the young as has probably never been duplicated in America. For the purpose of this inquiry, the close relations of the museums and the Public Library enabled us to obtain Miss Connolly's services for an investigation into what modern museums are preaching and practising as to their educational functions.

Miss Connolly read the Directory of American Museums, and marked the names of 82 museums which seemed likely to yield profit along the line of our inquiry. To these she wrote, asking for information, either through printed matter or by letter, on the special features of their educational activities. To these queries she received in reply 74 letters and 130 printed documents of more or less relevance. These she read, marking passages of interest, and from the study of these and other sources of information was made a tentative itinerary, later revised and expanded.

She visited first, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York Zoological Park, the American Museum of Natural History, the Aquarium, the Children's Museum in Bedford Park, Brooklyn, the Museum of the Brooklyn Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Industrial Museum of Cooper Union, and the museum collected by the New Jersey Department of Education at Trenton.

Then she took a short eastern trip including, in Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Natural History and the Children's Museum; in Worcester, the Art Museum, the Museum of the Natural History Association, and the Children's Museum of Clark University; in Providence, the Roger Williams Park Museums; in Washington, D. C., the Smithsonian, and its Children's Room, the National Museum, including the departments of geology, biology and ethnology, and the Bureau of Education; in Philadelphia, the Academy of Fine Arts Museum, its Alumni Club, the Commercial Department of the Philadelphia Museums, the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences, and the Wagner Free Institute of Sciences. She already knew fairly well the work of the Museum in Fairmount Park and that of the Drexel Institute.