Parallel Session 8: The role of books and literature in public communication of science

READING AND SCIENCE PROGRAM: STORYTELLING WITH THE OSWALDO CRUZ FOUNDATION’S RESEARCHES

Carla Gruzman 1 and Adriana Assumpção 2

1 Centro de Educação em Ciências do Museu da Vida/COC /FIOCRUZ
Tel: 55 21 38652186. R. Marquesa de Santos 53/605, Laranjeiras Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brasil, CEP: 22221080. carlag@coc.fiocruz.br

2 Centro de Educação em Ciências do Museu da Vida/COC /FIOCRUZ
Tel: 55 21 38652130. R. Açapuva 196/202, Higienópolis Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brasil, CEP: 21050 730 assumpcao@coc.fiocruz.br

Abstract

This work discusses the participation of researchers in the Reading and Science Program in the Museum of Life. Integrating part of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), in Rio de Janeiro, the museum has as its aim to inform and educate people in science, health and technology in a playful and interactive way. The Program proposition of work is based on the articulation between literature for children and young people and science departing from themes related to health and environment, which are contemplated by the institution. Our study is based on interviews which were conducted with researchers, on the questions that arise during the debate with the visiting audience and on observations made by the team. From the accomplished analysis, we searched for comprehending how this program can contribute to the popularization of science.

Key Words: Literature, Popularization, Science Museums

Text

The Reading and Science Program proposition starts from the initiative of the Education in Science Center at the Museum of Life interested in sensitizing and founding the professional team in the museum for the development of activities which are aimed at the promotion of reading. The guiding principle of the activities is related to the possibility of articulating literature, science and daily life departing from themes that are more closely related to our institution’s general contents – science, health and technology.

In this work, we will discuss the reading practices and its interface with the educational field and scientific diffusion for, then, presenting an exploratory study.
on the participation of Fiocruz’s researchers in the monthly event *Storytellers in the Museum of Life*. We tried to comprehend the researcher’s perceptions and attribution of meanings in relation to the proposition of articulation between literature for children and young people and science.

The monthly event counts on a group of storytellers that approach the approached theme; the contribution of a researcher who brings the account of his daily work; followed by a moment of debate with the participation of all the people who are present. The public on weekends is really diverse.

The close link between reading and social participation was reaffirmed by the educator Paulo Freire in the Brazilian Third Reading Congress, held in 1981. According to him, reading is a knowledge process and a creating act. Thus, promoting reading is being able to share with the other not only the aesthetic and affective aspects of the taste for reading, but also acting in an active way in the development of cognitive aspects which are related to knowledge, allowing the development of criticism and analysis ability.

Currently, in the educational field, the concern with reading and the reader’s education has been expressed through studies which approach the knowledge involved in the daily act of teaching and learning, the multiple languages that permeate the reading practices and the different dimensions that act in the diffusion of literature and the education of its audience, among others, (Lajolo, 2002; Paiva, 2003; Soares, 2003).

In our investigations we discussed aspects like: What is the profile of the researcher who participates in the storytellers event? Which are this researcher’s expectations in relation to this proposition? Which resources does he use in his narrative? How does the researcher evaluates his own participation in the activity?

Our study was based in the qualitative approach. As research subjects, we identified those Fiocruz’s researchers who participated in the monthly events in the period from 2001 to 2002. Thus, from the seventeen professionals who were invited, we interviewed thirteen researchers using a semi-structured interview script as a research tool.

Based on the interview analysis, we observed that the moment of presentation to the audience generates great expectations in the researcher. At first, some of them planned a lecture, but after some preparatory meetings with the team, they decided for a more informal presentation. Most of the researchers used different kinds of languages in their communication with the audience. Thus, other resources were incorporated to the verbal narrative: images – slides, OHP transparencies, photographs, video snippets; sounds – sounds and music; text – explanatory leaflets, books, primers; specimen samples – samples of insect, periwinkle and medicinal plants collections; reference objects – indigenous, childish and recyclable objects; and even the use of dramatization of different situations and special clothing.
In relation to the subjects, we make evident that even those who perform their work taking into account the production and circulation of knowledge, affirm that scientific diffusion is still in its beginning. As to the museum’s role, they highlight the aspects of education and science and health diffusion as part of their mission, besides the importance of including nearby communities in the discussions. Most of the interviewers claimed ignoring other activities involving storytellers and scientific diffusion. We observe that although many interviewers expressed their concern about the dismythication of science, the academic language was present in their communication, which made the audience’s comprehension difficult. The subjects considered the fact of talking to a heterogeneous audience as a challenge, but it was also a rich experience as it favored the dialogue with visitors, enlarging the population’s access to scientific information.

Our study has showed that the researchers who participated in the Reading and Science Program comprehend the museum’s role as an important social space for scientific diffusion practices. In this context, the proposed activity enables the visitors to relate science aspects with their daily life, also collaborating with the democratization of scientific knowledge. This work has also signaled that the enlargement of the identified themes can be really positive, as we could embrace themes which are suggested by the visitors themselves. We also believe that this activity can be developed with the school audience.

References


