

DEATH AND LOSS

The Boston Children's Museum plans an exhibit on Death and Loss to enable families to explore and discuss this important issue together in a non-threatening family learning environment. This exhibit will make use of , miniatures, dioramas, myths, songs, stories and puppets, as well as artifacts relating to the treatment of death in our own and other societies.

Death and loss is a subject that few are comfortable discussing even though the experience of loss is one we will all share despite cultural and personal differences. As children learn about themselves and natural life processes, they are puzzled by the reactions of others to that most natural event in the life cycle-- death, and the concomitant loss we all feel as a result. This exhibit would encourage families to share their fears, questions and concerns with one another on this perplexing topic.

Although research indicates that children become aware of and have questions about death at an early age, many adults have difficulty broaching the subject to children. Most find themselves unable to do so adequately when the family is faced with the death of a relative, friend or pet.

Our interest in Death and Loss began over five years ago as children asked us about fossil artifacts and living animals in our natural history exhibits. In addition, a staff member suffered from a terminal illness. Like many families, we found ourselves, over a long period, trying to come to terms with her inevitable loss. Her death brought the issues home to us and forced us to acknowledge our own questions and ambivalences.

A survey of available literature astounded us with its numbers; unfortunately, it is unlikely to be utilized when there is no pressing need or once a death occurs.

Our research showed us that:

- o At a very early age, children are exposed to death in fairy tales, songs, on TV, and in religious stories. They may already have experienced the loss of a friend, relative or pet, and evince curiosity about death and our coping rituals.
- o Parents tend to "protect" children from knowledge about experiences they can't make "better" and thus tend not to initiate discussions about death with children until such a loss occurs. At that time, parents may feel helpless and inadequate to the task.
- o Many parents have not resolved the issues of death and loss of their own loved ones, and fewer had positive experiences discussing it with their parents, thus making it difficult to do so with their own children.
- o Once a loss has occurred, adults are less likely than ever to go through a library or search for articles to prepare them for such a discussion.

Our research took us to humanists and advisors culled from a range of disciplines: psychology, theology, literature, medicine, history, philosophy and the arts. Each brought to the discussion his or her personal view as well as a perspective from the field of specialization that demonstrated how widely we could approach the topic in an exhibit drawing on cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary belief systems and practices.

The exhibit will present a range of materials to adults and children to encourage dialogue in a supportive, "living-room" -like setting. Cognizant of differing levels of comprehension and comfort with talking about death, we plan for the exhibit to present this issue on an ascending scale of personalization. Multiple entry and exit points will allow visitors to set their own pace and level of exposure, absorbing what they are capable of at any given time.

A plethora of songs, stories, rituals and traditions have arisen to help us cope with death. Drawing on these, exhibit components will include the following:

Introduction Panel: This panel, geared to adults, will explain the nature of the exhibit and how we hope it will be used. It will also affirm the parents' option to select which part or parts of the exhibit to explore, if at all, or they may choose to bypass it completely.

Myth: This section will make use of puppets, tapes, and/or illustrations to tell a story focussing on death that adults and children immediately recognize, such as Little Red Riding Hood. This space may also include children's songs or games that were originally concerned with death, such as "Ring Around the Rosy".

Is It Alive? Is It Dead? Very young children are often confused about what is alive, what was once alive or what is inanimate. Using stethoscopes, children will learn how to distinguish whether or not something is alive. A central example might consist of a live snake, a stuffed snake, and a toy snake, although many examples of living, dead, and inanimate objects will be provided.

Life Cycles: This section will replicate a natural life cycle in which things live, die and become part of the soil from which new, live things grow, using insects, snakes and plant life. Other life cycles, such as those of vegetables, dinosaurs, and trees will demonstrate that there are short and long life spans and that death is important to the cycle and to the continuance of life.

Human Death: Drawing on our rich and varied cultural artifacts from Japan, Native America, Egypt, Mexico and the United States, we will explore the beliefs and practices of people from other cultures and other ages regarding death.

A Human Death: Story panels in this section will permit us to tell a more personal story of a family's loss of a grandparent. This fictional account of a single family will use miniatures, dioramas, illustrations and personal artifacts to show the range of emotions and reactions that family members experience and the interactions of relatives as they face the death of a loved one.

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Audio-Visual: Videotapes of children discussing a loss, cross-cultural funeral music and taped puppet presentations are just a few of the ways this section can be used to teach kids about death. Other possibilities include celebrities revealing personal feelings about death, the difference between TV death and real death, and a chance for visitors to tape record their own fears, reactions to or experiences with death.

Adult Resource Room: Like a cosy living-room, this unit will be centrally located within the exhibit, comfortable and replete with books, reading lists, hand-outs, back-up materials and other resources. At times, a trained resource person will be on hand to make referrals and to direct visitors to specific information.

We're confident of our ability to present exhibits on controversial themes based on the success we've had with previous exhibits like "What If You Couldn't...?", an exhibit on disabilities. That exhibit was toured by SITES, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, and we receive many requests for copies of it and other of our exhibits from around the country.

Planning is well underway and we intend to produce and install a preliminary version of Death and Loss in 1984. After six months, we'll evaluate, revise and determine the feasibility of a traveling version.

We have recently received a \$20,000 matching grant from the Massachusetts Foundation on the Humanities and Public Policy towards its installation, and are seeking the additional \$30,000 to make this important and compelling exhibit possible.

COVERPAGE

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University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003

Elaine
File Death/Loss

GRANT APPLICATION

A Project to Plan and Mount a Tryout Exhibition on the Topic of Death and Loss
Name of project
Elaine Heumann Gurian, Director, Exhibit Center
Boston Children's Museum, 300 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210 (617) 426-6500
Name, address and phone number of project director (person who has charge of the project and is chief contact for the Foundation)
Phyllis D. O'Connell, Associate Director
Boston Children's Museum, 300 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210 (617) 426-6500
Name, address and phone number of project treasurer (person -- cannot be the project director or a relation -- who has charge of accepting, dispersing, and keeping accounts of project funds)

Summary of project: the social controversy or concern; use of the humanities; audience; and format. Please confine to this space. The Boston Children's Museum proposes to plan, develop and mount a tryout version of an interactive exhibit and resource area on the topic of Death and Loss; to test and evaluate this exhibit. If successful, we will seek funds to revise it in our museum and prepare a travelling copy. More and more, the issues of death and loss are of concern to adults and children. Urbanization limits opportunities to discuss death spontaneously; sociologists and anthropologists believe death has replaced sex as the taboo of the late 20th Century and yet scholars disagree about if, what, when and how the subject should be treated. Meanwhile children and adults have few chances to engage in dialogue about the feelings, fears and issues the subject evokes. Humanities disciplines provide a wealth of materials and information to help families better understand the issues surrounding death and loss, and, if presented in a manageable way, these materials can help families to select from among these resources and ideas the ones which are appropriate for their own circumstance. The Boston Children's Museum offers opportunities to learn and explore in a style and tone which is intentionally low-keyed, comfortable, non-threatening and non-judgemental. We have successfully presented complex and emotionally-charged themes before. In 1976 the Museum mounted "What If You Couldn't...", an exhibit which allowed visitors to frankly explore disabling conditions, the special problems they posed and the remediations possible. A copy travelled for two years with SITES (Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Services) and was fully booked. SITES requested a two year extension but we declined due to our visitors' dismay when we de-installed our copy after three years here. If the trial exhibit on Death and Loss is equally successful, it, too, can be revised into a final version at our location and a travelling version for other museums throughout the country. The Boston Children's Museum serves 400,000-plus visitors each year, 45 per cent of whom are adults.

Dates of project: March 1, 1983 to February 28, 1984

Summary of project budget:

Amount requested from the Foundation \$20,000
Matching Amount to be supplied by grantee \$26,787
Total cost \$46,787

4/10/82
Date

Elaine Heumann Gurian
Signature of project director

Phyllis D. O'Connell
Signature of project treasurer

Brief Museum Profile

The Boston Children's Museum serves over 400,000 visitors each year, 45 per cent of whom are adults. The Museum, a collections-based institution, was founded in 1913, and is committed to helping people learn from an increasingly tough and demanding world by providing hands-on access to objects, materials and programs about issues that affect our lives.

The Museum is concerned about our own and other cultures, the natural and manmade worlds, and the processes by which everyone learns and grows. The 15 major exhibits which address these topics are further supported by a Resource Center which circulates more than 10,000 multi-media materials, kits and curriculum units, and offers courses, workshops and teacher training seminars. Staff specialists in subject matter areas (called Developers) are responsible for developing entire programs along a single theme. The Developer carries through on all elements of a topic from exhibit and exhibit programs to staff and teacher training, kit and curriculum materials development, collections, workshops and courses.

The Boston Children's Museum, the second oldest in the United States, has for 20 years led the profession in the field of interactive and innovative educational practices in museums. An average of a dozen professionals, from every type of museum and from all over the world, seek assistance from us each week. Located on the waterfront, the Museum has 21,000 square feet of public space. This year our balanced budget is slightly over \$2 million. The Museum is fully accessible physically and programmatically (See Appendices A, Catalog; B, F/Y '83 budget; and C, F/Y'82 audit).

Needs

Death and loss are a part of human life -- the one thing we will all share. Yet addressing this inevitability is very uncomfortable in our current American culture. For example, the English anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer suggested in 1965 that death has replaced sex as the unspeakable subject in the west. Phillipe Aries, in his Western Attitudes Toward Death, states that "the west has gone from understanding death as something that happens to us to thinking and feeling about death as something that happens to others". A review of changing fairy tales confirms this discomfort on the part of adults. For example, the story of Little Red Riding Hood originally recorded by the Grimm brothers contains several violent deaths. Our collection of fairy tales shows clearly that as the story moves both westward and towards us in time that it is increasingly modified until in some renditions there is no death at all.

Audry Gordon and Dennis Kloss in their book, They Need to Know How to Teach Children About Death, state that parents want to protect their children: "If anything does go wrong in the child's world, we adults feel guilty or powerless when we cannot make it better. Since we cannot make death better, we try to protect the child from it." They continue by stating that many fear that lifting the death taboo will have the same results as lifting the sexual taboos.

During the past decade those taboos have been challenged with such works as those of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and the film of Joan Robinson which have received wide public attention, and through the groundswell of the hospice movement in this country and England. But they have not met with universal acceptance by any means. Gordon and Kloss note that many people use Kubler-Ross's "Five Stages of Death" as technique and not meaning, while Ron Rosenbaum's cover story on the July, 1982 edition of Harper's Magazine is a scathing condemnation of what he terms "drop-dead chic".

While there is much dissension among humanists, scholars and practitioners, our feedback shows a growing eagerness on the part of adults to learn how to address the issues of death and loss for themselves and for their children. Despite contention among professionals in the field, our research shows that:

- . While children relate to death and loss depending on their stage of development and their ability to understand abstract ideas as well as concrete ones, they begin to have questions, concerns and fears very early in life.
- . How parents were treated regarding death in their own childhood is a significant factor in determining how they will treat their children -- especially if they are not able to learn about other ways of approaching the issues.
- . Everyone has had some loss -- even young children. Death of a pet, a grandparent or even having a playmate move away brings the issues to the foreground for children.

This is a complex issue and in order to make choices and resolve issues, families need a broad range of experiences from various disciplines.

Therefore, our exhibit should include: (1) how other cultures relate to and behave toward death; (2) how death fits into the natural cycle of life; (3) how others in our own culture treat death; (4) what range of emotional behaviors are available and used; (5) that even within broad religious and philosophical constructs many personal variations and choices are permitted; and (6) some demystification of the processes surrounding death (e.g., embalming, caskets, cremation, etc.).

Therefore, by offering multiple levels of entry and approach, and by addressing different levels of comprehension, we can present a rich array of humanities information through literature, history, theology, philosophy, anthropology and sociology as well as through the physical sciences and daily life examples.

Project Background

More than five years ago our natural history Developer, Katherine (Kaki) Aldrich, began to understand how many visitors had questions and misunderstandings about death. She also became aware of how difficult it was for parents to help their children learn about this emotional and abstract topic. Kaki began working on possible ways to present this topic in an exhibit format, and the Museum began seeking planning and development funds.

After talking with the National Institutes of Health and Mental Health, the National Endowment for the Humanities and private foundations and individuals, we realized we needed to work through the issues more thoroughly ourselves before we could expect even planning support.

About that time Kaki, who had survived one very serious bout with cancer, once again became its victim, and in September of 1981 she died. Even though all of the major staff on this project have suffered the death of a close relative, our corporate sense of Kaki's loss to us helped us understand the need, the process of mourning, and the generally solitary way individuals must often accept death and the concomitant loss. We believe we are now able to constructively present this confusing and mysterious subject to our audience.

Last summer we embarked on planning and researching the issues. For weeks each new book, report, conversation seemed to reinforce the difficulties surrounding the project. The attraction/repulsion syndrome continued, and our own fluxuating emotions provided an accurate barometer to gauge the reactions of others. In September the project staff held an open meeting for everyone in the Museum who was interested in and willing to discuss the issues. Those who attended represented each division and every level and type of job. Issues and problems emerged clearly and included:

- Families need the opportunity and the permission to discuss death, dying and loss in a forum which encourages and aids dialogue. This

primary theme which emerged in the staff meeting reflected our study of resources as well (See Appendix D, selected notes from research).

- . Adults need ways to confront and accept death and loss themselves so they can effectively help their children.
- . Parents want, but seldom know how, to deal sensitively but truthfully with children over these issues. Urbanization limits the number of spontaneous instances which often trigger such dialogues in more rural settings.
- . Adults and children alike often need "permission" to express their emotional responses to death and loss. Sorrow is an expected response, but many are unaware that anger, guilt, and relief are also common experiences. Children are often confused by the stories and laughter that sometimes occur during the mourning period because they do not understand that part of the mourning is also a celebration of the dead person's life.
- . Many people need assurance that it is possible to survive a loss.
- . Almost everyone needs to know how to find additional resources once the topic has surfaced.
- . Many people need help in feeling at ease offering or accepting comfort from others at the time of loss. This is magnified by cultural differences. For example, a person who is only vaguely uncomfortable at a wake may be completely at a loss when visiting with a Jewish family which is sitting Shiva.
- . Adults are often at a loss to help children understand the differences between "TV death" and real death.

These issues and needs were reiterated in both the literature and in a subsequent meeting with humanists and advisors. Staff, humanists and advisors then began looking at the problems and possibilities in presenting this information. The potential problems included:

- . Is an exhibit an appropriate or useful format? How can we bring words to life with objects and activities?
- . This is a very personal and upsetting subject for most people. How can we avoid "uncorking" something -- especially if we make this a compelling exhibit? Conversely, since each person comes with his or her own private experience, how can we make the exhibit non-specific enough to accommodate the reflection of anyone's previous experience in a manner that is not too diluted to be effective?
- . Can we treat the religious, philosophical and cross-cultural implications well? As in some of our other exhibits, we know we can offer visitors an opportunity to discover a range of beliefs and opinions without supporting any one of them over others.

- . Children have different levels of comprehension during various levels of development. We must be able to make this exhibit useful for all stages of development.
- . Some people have already expressed anger at the idea we would mount such an exhibit. We must train staff carefully to be prepared for the anger that is aroused, whatever the source.
- . How can we distinguish between curiosity and "morbid fascination"? Children want to know what happens at the undertakers and how mummies are made, but how much of this is really useful?
- . We must provide "escape" routes in the exhibit so that visitors do not have to go further into the issues than they can comfortably handle.

From all this came more research and planning. Our investigation showed that there exists a vast wealth of literature on the topic. There are books for children; there are books for adults; there are books for parents to read to children and those for parents to read in preparing themselves to talk to children about death and loss. There are academic and scientific studies about death, loss and the life cycle. There are religious and cultural tomes, treatises and psychological studies. There are personal experiences. There is even a compedium on the books about death (Appendix D).

We were surprised to find such an overwhelming array of written resources. Since death and loss are issues that most of us shy away from, few of us are willing to cull this mass to discover which of these resources are useful for us and/or our children. It is not easy to choose this task as a weekend project. Yet to tackle it when already bereaved is both less likely to happen and less likely to be useful.

Furthermore, there are segments of the population for whom libraries and books -- especially scholarly ones -- are not a comfortable, accessible learning mode.

This led us to believe that the topic of death and loss is appropriate for an exhibit and that we, as a children's museum, were a good site for the following reasons:

- . People who are uncomfortable tackling the mass of literature need a comfortable beginning place and assistance in bridging to the next level of resources;
- . It is easier to approach the topic in a comfortable setting, among other interesting experiences than it is to decide to seek it out alone;

- The Boston Children's Museum is just such a comfortable place where people elect to go;
- The Children's Museum is already encouraging dialogue between parents and children on a number of other topics;
- Books tend to be isolating unless they are read aloud among the family; exhibits allow all members to participate together in the learning, exploring experience;
- An exhibit format allows for the presentation of many of the elements and ideas accompanying the topic, whereas books tend to deal with a single element of the issue. For example, Death is Natural (Pringle, Four Winds Press), treats only the elements of natural history and life cycles.

Having completed these steps, we also researched ways in which other museums have addressed death and loss in exhibits. We discovered that there are three basic types of presentations:

1. Anthropological/Sociological or Historical. "Celebrations" (See Appendix G), currently showing at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution is an example of the anthropological or sociological approach. It is rich in artifacts relating to death rituals among many cultures and times. "A Time to Mourn" at the Museums of Stoney Brook is an example of an historical perspective seen from within one culture.
2. Natural History/Life Cycle. These presentations tend to take a scientific or ecological approach, showing the relationship of all living things to one another. The exhibit in the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia is one of many examples of this type of exhibit.
3. Role-Play. One museum has attempted to present a participatory exhibit using coffins and tombstones to allow visitors to role-play death. While we want to present an interactive and highly personal exhibit, we will not assume that it is possible to understand death and loss by pretending to be dead.

Each of these types of exhibits present useful information. But they quite often do not provide an integrated view of death and loss. We would like to use elements of these types of exhibits and add others to allow for the exploration of the concomitant issues of feelings, survival, theology or cultural interpretations as well.

Goals

The design of the exhibit itself will promote opportunities for visitors to go as deeply into the exhibit as they feel comfortable doing (See Appendix H, rough conceptual drawing). Initial panels will be informative

and inviting, but will also serve as an enclosure for those using the exhibit. Unlike some exhibits, we believe this is one in which the interaction should be between family members and the materials themselves; that it should feel personal and should offer some privacy.

The exhibit will consist of components, each of which visitors can choose to enter or pass by. The order of the components will go from least personal to most personal. For adults, our goals will be to (1) allow them to look at their own personal losses, especially those of their parents; (2) to recognize and resolve feelings they may have about how their parents and other adults dealt with them about death when they were children; and (3) learn about some ways to work with their own children about death and loss.

For children, our goals will be to allow them to (1) ask the questions they are often afraid or don't know how to ask; (2) to reveal their thinking, feelings and fears; and (3) gain more comfort in facing and coping with their own experiences with death and loss.

Nuts and Bolts

The exhibit components will include:

Introduction Panel. This will be aimed primarily at adults and will explain that this is an exhibit about the most puzzling thing about being alive: dying. It will detail some of the features of the exhibit and how we hope people will use it, as well as give license to bypass it.

Credit Panel. This will be a formal list of funders, developers, designers, humanists, advisors and others closely involved in the exhibit.

Myth. This will be the 'real' introduction to the exhibit. Our thinking now is that it should use literature, myth or legend and should be a story immediately recognizable in the way Greek plays were to their audiences. It should focus on death -- perhaps the original Little Red Riding Hood. This area might also be a place for games, rhymes or songs whose original themes were death (e.g., Ring Around the Rosy). The story might be presented with puppets, tapes, illustrations or combinations thereof.

There will be two messages in this section: (1) people are concerned with death from a young age; and (2) stories and myths are ways to think about it and work out some of those issues, feelings and questions.

Is It Alive? Is It Dead? This area will consist of examples of many things that are now alive, are dead but were once alive and others which

were never alive. Although visually rich, there will be one central example. A snake might work well: a live snake (which seldom moves and therefore might seem dead); a stuffed snake; and a toy snake (probably a stuffed toy).

The central question and issue raised and demonstrated here is: How do we know when something is alive and when it is dead? This is especially useful for young children whose level of development and comprehension is at the concrete operational level. At this stage they tend to make broad distinctions such as: "if it moves, it's alive; if it does not move, it is dead". Technological devices such as heat sensors or stethoscopes can help visitors learn ways of detecting life. It is possible that we will be able to address the issue of real death versus TV death in this section.

This is Dead and Is Part of a Cycle. This area will consist of at least two examples of live things that are dying and at the same time show what happens to them. We hope to present a container of insects and plant life that have short life spans, and a snake which eats live things and then defecates. The dead matter should fall through to other containers where other live things begin the decomposing process.

In this section, too, will be other, flatter displays which will trace both the short and long term cycles such as vegetables from garden to table to compost heap; dinosaurs and plants to oil and rock; and trees to wooden objects to junk heap to soil to new trees. Possibly, we will show the life cycle of a star.

The central theme here is that all things are a part of a larger cycle. Supporting ideas will be that the larger cycle is necessary and that from death comes life.

Human Death. This area will consist of examples of how people in other times and cultures have treated death. Using our rich collections in the areas of Japan, Native American, Egyptian, Mexico and Americana, we will explore cross-cultural, theological and philosophical beliefs and traditions. Joan Lester, a cultural anthropologist who has investigated Mexican Day of the Dead traditions, is a specialist in Northeast Native American cultures and is our Curator of Collections, can identify, select and interpret our collections materials on these two cultures. Our Japan Developer, Leslie Bedford, is eager to use our Japanese Butsudan and related

artifacts to explore the O-Ban ceremonies, and we have several excellent Egyptian artifacts, including a mummy mask, which can be used to present information about an ancient culture. To avoid favoring any belief or precept, we plan to present the information as "some people believe this; some people believe that. What does your family believe?" The artifacts and themes presented in this section will help serve as a transition to the next area, a more personal view of death.

A Human Death. This will be a story -- a "book on the wall" which uses artifacts, illustrations, text, miniatures and dioramas. The story will be about a specific family that loses a relative -- probably a grandparent. It will track the family from the realization that the grandparent is going to die through his/her death and burial. It will include what each member of the family has to do, and what each thinks and feels like during the process. It should express the many choices and feelings that people have during such times, models for expressing them and specific information about what happens when someone dies. The purpose of this section will be to allow visitors to explore the relationships this family has to (1) the person dying and (2) to one another during this time, and (3) to show how those relationships and feelings are expressed. Therefore, our current thinking is that we will concentrate on these relationships and avoid complicating that issue by adding specific ethnic or cultural traditions.

We expect to use a series of dioramas showing family activities in perhaps the hospital, the funeral home, during the funeral service and then the household after the funeral. The use of dioramas and miniatures will allow individuals to get close, absorb, and explore privately, within their own minds, the information and concepts presented. We will also use personal artifacts here to show how people keep a dead person's possessions as a way to begin and maintain traditions and family history and to keep personal memories alive.

Audio-Visual. There are many possibilities for use here. They include: (1) videotapes of kids talking about a loss; (2) presentations by Puppet Therapist Susan Linn and others of issues about which children worry; (3) TV death and the difference between fictional stories seen on TV and TV news films which depict real deaths; (4) famous personalities talking about their own experiences, fears or feelings about death and loss; and (5) funeral music

ranging from New Orleans funeral jazz to requiems to dirges. We may also offer visitors an opportunity to talk into a tape recorder and to record their own impressions, reactions or worries. This would offer greater participation and could be an excellent evaluation tool. However, should we decide to use this for evaluation, we will let our visitors know what and how we will do so before they participate.

Adult Resource Area. This will be located in the center of the exhibit and will provide visual access to each of the other sections. It will be an inviting place to sit down, read information, look at books and materials, read a book with a child, or observe children in the other exhibit areas. It will provide additional information relating to each of the sections regarding developmental information, children's questions, possible worries and fears, and strategies for handling day-to-day 'crises' such as a pet's death or a playmate moving to another city.

This is probably where a staff person will be based. It will be a physically comfortable space, and probably will be less well-lit than other sections, with the exception of the Audio-Visual component. It should feel like a living room on a cloudy winter afternoon -- dim but cosy.

Ancillary Materials. Consistent with our Museum-wide practice, this exhibit will be supported with additional resources. We have successfully modeled a project which places second level learning materials and information about additional resources within the context of the exhibit itself, thereby helping visitors to bridge from one level of experience to the next. We will do the same with the Death and Loss exhibit. In the Adult Resource Area we will have books and materials from our Resource Center available for use on the exhibit space. In addition, we will compile bibliographies and produce other take-away sheets which adults can use later.

We know that elements of this exhibit have worked well in other exhibits on different topics. For example:

- . We can create a compelling story for children and adults as we did in "Alvin" in "What If You Couldn't...?" (See Appendix I, book of Alvin).
- . We can integrate artifacts, photographs, illustrations, and dioramas in a "book on the wall" format, as we did in "Toshi's Story" in the "Japanese House Introductory Exhibit" (See Appendix J).

- . We have designed seating areas for adults which allow them to make use of adult materials while still being close to their children as in our "Playscape" and "Fort Point Health Clinic" exhibits (See Appendix A, p. 10).
- . We have used puppets, games, fairy tales, miniatures and video-tapes successfully in many other exhibits, all of which have worked well to engage visitors in personalizing their own experiences and concepts. One striking example of this was our use of puppets in the emotional disturbances section of the "What If You Couldn't...?" exhibit.
- . We have and have used daily life artifacts from our cross-cultural collections to evoke comparisons of similarities and differences, as well as to stimulate adults to relate important personal histories to their children as in our Meeting Ground and our Grandparents' House exhibits (Appendix A, pp.24 and 15).
- . We know how to integrate beginning learning through dual level signage and multiple entry points. Because the Children's Museum is seen as a place that is both fun and educational for children, adults feel comfortable in engaging in their own beginning learning as well. In "What If You Couldn't...?" we developed one signage system for children and a different one for adults. That allowed all adults the freedom to engage in their own learning in a non-threatening environment, and to become teachers and facilitators for their children.

When and Where

We propose to begin planning, development and design in the spring of 1983, and to produce and install a tryout version to be mounted in the Museum in early 1984. We will keep the exhibit up for at least six months during which time we will conduct evaluation, make minor revisions, and decide if it can be successfully replicated for travelling to other museums.

If this exhibit tryout is successful, we hope to make final revisions for the copy at our Museum and to design and package a travelling version. The Children's Museum constantly receives requests for copies of our exhibits. Few places know how to design interactive exhibits for adults and children, especially on such emotionally-charged topics. This is demonstrated by the requests for and success of the "What If You Couldn't...?" exhibit.

Humanities Themes

We will use a number of humanities fields to help present this topic. By using some of the scholarship and research available in the disciplines of history, religion, philosophy, sociology and literature, in combination

with American and cross-cultural artifacts, mythology and personal history, we hope to provide avenues by which visitors can use all of these humanistic resources to enrich and resolve their own approach to the very human issues of death and loss. Humanists, advisors and staff will survey and select materials from the following disciplines:

- Literature and sociology. Literature, myth, legend, rhymes and games have helped people both confront and address these issues, and have allowed people to replay the issues and feelings again and again until the process is complete. Sociology can show visitors how different times and peoples have conceived and treated death and loss. In the Myth, A Human Death and Adult Resource Areas, we will ask Dr. Bertman (who serves as a literature, sociological and medical ethics consultant) to explore the most appropriate myths, stories or legends to use. Our collections curator and cultural developers will be able to select and define the historical and sociological implications of both the literature and artifacts we use.
- Religion and philosophy can offer schools of belief and ritual which have aided people in coping with death and loss. Humanists in these disciplines can provide needed assistance in the sections on Is It Alive, Is It Dead?, Human Death and A Human Death.
- Cultural anthropologists, curators and developers will survey and select material objects from contemporary and other times, as well as from our own and other cultures, to help visitors better understand the role of objects in preserving memories and personal histories.
- All of the humanists and advisors will be asked to select other humanities-based materials and resources for the Adult Resource Area.

The Search for and Role of Humanists and Advisors

As we began our search for scholars and professional humanists we added to the formal definition our own special criteria which included:

- Humanists and advisors would have to be able to help translate their knowledge to reach an audience ranging from preschoolers to grandparents;
- Their knowledge would have to be translated for a public comprised both of highly educated adults and those for whom the scholarly approach would be off-putting;
- Humanists and advisors would naturally come with their own perspectives, but would need to be willing to have that expressed as only one element or perspective of a larger whole; and
- They would need to be people who already knew or could learn to understand the complexities of interactive exhibit design; and to be sensitive to our style and tone as one which is intentionally low-keyed, comfortable, non-threatening and non-judgmental.

After defining these seemingly impossible criteria, we developed a four-pronged approach for our search:

1. We culled names from our survey of the literature.
2. We started a news and magazine clipping file of related stories;
3. We contacted people with whom we've worked before on emotionally-charged issues or abstract themes; and
4. We contacted members of our Board whom we thought could refer us to others more directly involved with these issues.

To our surprise and pleasure, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Enthusiasm was evident and many offered suggestions about others to contact as well. The list grew too large and reached too far afield. After culling the list, however, we discovered we still need to identify an historian and perhaps consult with another cultural anthropologist. In the meantime, we have worked with the following who will serve either as humanists or advisors:

Humanists and Advisors

David Barnard (B.A., Ideas and Methods, University of Chicago; M.A., Comparative History, Brandeis University; M.T.S., Psychology, Theology, Ethics, Harvard University; Ph.D., Religion and Society, Harvard University) who teaches death, loss and philosophy at Northeastern University.

Dr. Sandra L. Bertman (B.A., Vassar College; Ed.M with honors, Boston University), Associate Professor of Humanities in Medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester. Besides her expertise in medical ethics, Ms. Bertman has developed curricula for and taught children about the issues of death and the humanities, has been principal investigator for projects funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, served as a consultant on "Joan Robinson: One Woman's Story", published articles about the images of grief in literature, developed and taught courses for adults using literature and music to relate the issues of aging, and produced videotapes, television documentaries and radio programs on the subject. A major research study conducted by Dr. Bertman traced the changes which have occurred in the Little Red Riding Hood tale.

Gerald P. Koocher (A.B., Psychology, Boston University; M.A., Psychology, University of Missouri, Ph.D., Clinical and Developmental Psychology, University of Missouri), Director of Training and Senior Associate in Psychology,

The Children's Hospital Medical Center. In addition to his clinical investigations and research with children and death, Dr. Koocher was a consultant on a slide- and filmstrip/tape on the topic, and is the author of a number of articles, chapters and books on children and death and loss. Of special interest for this project are his "Death and Cognitive Development" (Developmental Psychology, 1973), "Talking with Children About Death (American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1974), "Conversations with Children about Death" (Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 1975), "Why Isn't the Gerbil Moving Anymore? Discussing Death in the Classroom" (Children Today, 1975), "The Development of the Death Concept in Childhood" (The Development of Concepts Related to Health: Future Directions in Developmental Psychology, 1981), and "Loss and Grief Issues" (Handbook of Clinical Child Psychology, 1982).

Susan Linn (B.A., psychology, University of Massachusetts, Boston; Ed.M., children's television and exploration of puppetry as a tool for self expression and communication, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Ph.D. candidate in counselling and consulting psychology, Harvard Graduate School of Education), created and implemented a staff position of Puppet Therapist at Children's Hospital Medical Center, using puppets to help hospitalized children talk about their feelings and gain mastery over their hospitalization. Ms. Linn has been a performer and consultant to the Children's Museum, and was especially active in the development of the "What If You Couldn't...?" exhibit and curriculum unit. She has been an instructor in human development for Lesley College and has published in the Journal of the American Medical Women's Association and the Journal for the Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals.

Jean M. Cummiskey (B.A., Political Science, Emmanuel College; M.A., Political Science and Urban and Environmental Policy, Tufts University), is a senior planning associate for HMO planning and development for Blue Cross of Massachusetts and an instructor in Politics of Aging and Politics of Health Care Planning and Reform at Emmanuel College.

We have talked with each of these people individually at least once and each was invited to attend the advisory planning meeting. Another such meeting is tentatively scheduled for early December. Each has received the notes and issue papers that evolved from the meetings. All have offered to share not only his or her ideas and knowledge, but the results of his or her own work including dissertations, video-, slide-, and filmtapes, bibliographies, articles and role-play activities and interviews.

In addition to these humanists and advisors, and to those we will identify later, we will draw upon the expertise of the humanists and subject matter specialists on our own staff. The Curator of Collections, Joan Lester, will assist in the research, identification and documentation of artifacts to be used. Developers for our Americana, Japan, Native American and multi-cultural programs will provide historical, cultural and sociological backgrounds pertinent to their fields. And, while not considered a humanist, our Early Child Development specialist will provide us with very necessary information that will allow this exhibit to work well for young children as well as for adults.

Project Staff

Project Director will be Elaine Heumann Gurian, Director of the Exhibit Center. She holds a bachelor's in art history from Brandeis University and a master's in education from Boston State College. She has been the project director on 15 federally funded projects, including ones from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was a consultant on the film "Joan Robinson: One Woman's Story" and is a Vice President of the American Association of Museums and of CECA, the educators arm of the International Congress of Museums.

Project Developer will be Janet Kamien, Associate Director of the Exhibit Center. She holds a bachelor's in theatre from Boston University and a master's in special needs and museums from Lesley College. She was the Developer of the "What If I Couldn't...?" exhibit and the six-unit curriculum kit developed under a sub-contract for the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. She is also author of a book by the same title for middle school children which is published by Charles Scribner's Sons. She was the co-project director of "Us and Them", a videotape about people with disabilities funded by the Massachusetts Foundation on the Humanities and Public Policy. As head of the Children's Museum design and production staff, she was selected as a member of the nine person delegation to India as their consultant to interactive exhibit design.

Designer will be Signe Hanson, Chief of Graphics for the Museum. She holds a bachelor's degree from Smith College in literature and sociology, and has studied at Boston University School of Fine and Applied Art and at the New England College of Art. She has served as designer on other Museum exhibits and projects, including many for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. She has been the illustrator of several commercially published books and has just returned from a one-year sabbatical in Norway where she worked as a graphics artist for an

advertising agency (See Appendix I, resumes and statements for humanists, advisors and project staff).

Audience

Our audience is over 400,000 visitors per year, 45 per cent of whom are adults. Visitor and member surveys show that while about 50 per cent of our visitors during peak travel seasons are coming for the first time and live within a day's travel of the Museum, that the other 50 per cent use the Museum many times each year. Among our general adult visiting population there are a substantial number who use no other cultural or educational resource in the area.

Publicity

Our large and broad natural audience will ensure that hundreds of thousands of people will have the opportunity to see and work with this exhibit. After the exhibit has been mounted and we have had several weeks of observing visitor reaction, we will devise a public relations strategy that could include press releases, feature stories, public service announcements, advertising, recorded line and newsletter coverage.

Evaluation

The Museum uses a tryout-and-revise method for all exhibits, programs and materials based on both formative and ongoing evaluation. We use observation, anecdotal and interview techniques. Interpreters on the exhibit spaces receive training from the Developer in special programs, provision of additional resources, and in observing and engaging visitors in conversation with an eye to evaluation.

In addition, the developer and designer conduct observation studies, sometimes videotaping them for later analysis and comparisons after revisions are made.

We also use "Talk Back Boards" which allow visitors to express their own reactions to an exhibit or to the entire Museum experience. This simple mechanism has afforded us with surprises, humour and useful insights which help us as we revise.

As mentioned earlier, if the Audio-Visual section includes an opportunity for visitors to record their personal experiences or reactions to the exhibit,

it would provide a source of excellent evaluative feedback. If we choose to use recordings in this manner, we will be sure visitors know in advance and will be assured anonymity.

BUDGET

SUMMARY

Requested from the Massachusetts Foundation on the Humanities and Public Policy:	\$20,000
Cash match by the Children's Museum:	\$14,188
Funds to be raised:	<u>\$12,599</u>
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS:	\$46,787

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Meeting with humanists and other advisors

Complete research and interviews

Final selection of exhibit components

Ongoing consultations with humanists and advisors

Develop story for "A Human Death"

Selection of artifacts/documentation

Preliminary design research and testing, especially of
use of live animals (insects/plants) and of technical
equipment

Planning of Audio-Visual components, development and production

Development and production of ancillary materials in tryout form

Construction of exhibit in a révisable tryout format

Installation of exhibit and materials

Staff training

Evaluation

Report.