Kathy Cremin

"It's not how strong you are, it's how you use the hammer"

> 'Heritage' reminds us that we belong; 'voice' offers the promise of what we can become. It is, I believe, reasonable to assert that an individual life that exhibits a balance between heritage and voice can be thought of as rich and empowered.[i] *Eric Booth*

When I read Eric Booth I wonder how many of us feel a sense of belonging in a museum, and how many of us feel a sense of promise about the ways our voices and heritage are connected to museum objects. Driven by a deep love of stories, and a love of the stories objects can tell, and driven by my hope that museums can play a meaningful role in connecting heritage and voice, I began looking at audio digital technology as a potential tool for people to talk within museums about what heritage is and why it matters.

I started learning about how museums could connect heritage and voice by listening to people who have broken new ground in how we use audio digital tools: Brad Klein who developed innovative work with Acoustiguide and set out the ways in which museum audio could use simple devices like creating audio-tours of unscripted spontaneous conversation between 'expert' and 'non-expert', living artists guiding tours, using oral history to compliment exhibitions; John Cotcher of the (then) Association of Mature Broadcasters and kick-starter of Vintage Radio, AgeUK; Dr. Shamus Smith of Durham University, who spoke to me about ways of 'augmenting' the *emotional and storied* reality of the museum.

As I explored the protocols that need to be developed between the expertise of the professionals and the public's right to a voice, together with the role of a museum in forming and shaping communities, I realised that all the most vibrant work (projects such as Nate DiMeo's Memorypalace or StoryCorps) had radio as a common link somewhere. My focus is that the values and practices of museum professionals need to change if conversation between museums and users about hearing different voices is to happen. Community radio is one of the practical tools that allow such interaction, and community radio is particularly effective because it is focused on community and individual social benefit. It is widely accessible without prejudice to gender, language, class, ethnicity or sexuality. The business of community radio is about enabling people to talk about what matters to them in their own voices. It is a trusting and safe space for people whose voices are not normally heard in the institutions of media.

Summary: In this paper I explore the question of whether digital audio tools could create powerful spaces for people's voices in museums and argue that to create genuine space for voice and transparent conversation we should learn from and use an existing process developed by community radio. I will look at (1) what museums can be (2) some of the challenges museums face in relation to voice, (3) how user voice has driven and lead practice within community and (some) public radio, and (4) in conclusion bring to light emerging practice using low-tech and easily replicable uses of sound and storytelling that aim to unleash a polyphony of new voices, drawing in new listeners and audiences to unlock collections and heritage in new ways.

1/ *What are museums and what could we be?*

I believe in the power of museum objects to whisper stories and sometimes sing them. I believe in objects and their stories as talismans that we pass from generation to generation, and museums as protectors of stories and palaces of enchantment and wonder. I am optimistic about people, about our practice in museums and about the power of heritage, identity, roots and belonging. The stories and the objects held by museums are tools that can stir for us what Seamus Heaney calls 'living roots (that) awaken in my head'; objects that are allowed to whisper, talk and sing help us understand who we are and our connections to the wider human family. In museums we place great weight upon our responsibilities as stewards of material heritage. We think a great deal less about the intangible heritage that runs alongside this, and the feelings, stories and rituals that are the DNA of how we pass on meaning.

All too often museums keep their stories, like their objects, locked in cages and behind glass. Too many days, being devoted to museums feels like sticking with a lover who can't remember if you take sugar in your coffee or whether you like HP sauce. It's a one-sided affair, and even though our conversations sound like conversations, only one of us is really listening. Nowadays, even the supermarket checkout gets to know our preferences, so it's not easy to keep forgiving just how poor museums can be at getting to know us, and letting us get to know them.

Here's an example of one-way conversation: In July 2010, I took part in a discussion on BBC Radio York about opportunities for museum users 'to make things happen'. The director of the National Media Museum offered as the best example of their participation practice a Guinness World Record attempt for the most Nintendo DS gamers playing simultaneously.[ii] They gained their record (659 gamers), but how or in what way was this is a meaningful example of digital tools creating engagement: did the interactions have a real lasting impact upon the museum's work? Did their processes and practices become more democratic as a consequence of these interactions? In the age of citizen journalism, social media and everyday realities that intimately connect our neighbourhoods to global turbulence we could, and should, expect more from our museums? Is it fair to ask whether meaningful use of digital tools for participation could mean more than World Records, when the National Media Museum boasts as its aim "to be the best museum in the world for inspiring people to learn about, engage with and create media", and to help people "feel equipped to deal with [. . .] and make media"?[iii]

This is not an attack on playfulness in museums, I am making the point that this was a closed experience with a pre-determined outcome; the 'interaction' couldn't lead anywhere. Of course museums should be what the American sociologist Ray Oldenburg calls a "great good place" where people connect and relax together; museums should be places where people "hang out simply for the pleasure of good company and lively conversation [. . .] the heart of a community's social vitality and the grassroots of democracy."[iv] Museums could and should be, hugely powerful parts of our social landscape. If Eric Booth is right, that heritage and voice together lead to a life that is "rich and empowered", and if Oldenburg is right about the power of "great good places", then the National Media Museum with its exciting infrastructure, staff skilled in digital technologies, and resources such as a fully equipped broadcast radio station, could indeed be a powerful democratic space for people to come together and 'make things happen'. So what is needed to liberate new participatory practice? Tools are not the heart of the matter here, the question is really about our core purpose *as organisations*, the essence of what we

are and how these values and mission are enacted in our practice. The tools are just that: tools. The impact of tools depends on how we use them, and what we think we need them for – in museums our tools are to make stories, and to keep finding ways to tell them better, as journalist Jacqui Banaszynski writes:

> As our world gets more fractured and yet smaller, stories that connect us and teach us about how our differences are not so different or where those differences exist, matter more than ever. So I don't think the answer is to file more briefs or dump more data into the pages of our newspapers and magazines. I think the answer is to do more stories. And I think for us the answer is to learn how to do them all better—that's our challenge.[v]
> *Jacqui Banaszynski, Pulitzer Prize for Feature Journalism 1988*

2/ 'Pardon, what did you say?'

Opening up interpretation through conversation is a powerful way of creating a movement of producers and followers for heritage. Unleashing stories through collections should be the natural territory of museums, and using technology to find and hear leaders in heritage work, and followers for it, should be a part of how we get stories into the world.

There are fantastic, beautiful projects that draw stories and histories into museums and that have generated a wealth of content. Yet such projects have tended to keep story-makers' voices annexed at a distance from the core museum work of collecting and interpreting. Typically "user generated content" is housed on a stand-alone project website, and even award winning museums work, such as Tyne and Wear's *Culture Shock!*[vi], replicates a 'digital story' format tried and tested by the BBC's decade-old projects *Telling Lives* and *Capture Wales*.[vii] The problem with replaying this model is that it hasn't developed, we haven't grown it from a collecting mechanism into a more fluid conversation – it's a one-way process. However 'interactive' or democratic this platform appears, once the collecting is done, the stories, as well as the experience *users* had in making them, don't reach into the internal workings of museums or how we work.[viii] We don't, for example, involve those story-makers routinely in exhibitions planning, or as a steering group for curatorial projects.[ix] Museums as institutions are built not to listen; as institutions we are impervious to two-way conversation; we are intentionally deaf to our users and no amount of technology will aid our listening unless our values and practices change.

Honest conversation is sometimes messy, and yet museums, remain sites of established and curated knowledge and order; our systems and institutions are geared for objects to be classified, displayed and given status. There's something deeply problematic for our sector's survival in how we currently see the essence of our work.[x] I can't help but feel that all the silos in our sector focusing on 'participation'—the annexes of audience development, learning departments, interactives—have worked alongside the layers of prestige and the focus on expert knowledge to make museums places that have resisted human conversation. The film *User Group Disco* (2009) by artist Elizabeth Price creates a fantastic, chilling picture of how the disembodied and authoritative voice of museums can both render loved objects lifeless and relegate precious objects to meaningless debris.[xi] Given that it is a focus on objects & collections that has driven our systems, this is a wretched irony.

3/ It's not the strongest who survive, but those who adapt to ecological changes

Whether museums like it or not we are going out of date, and we need to change. Forty-two

main museums have closed in last two years; there was not a single job advertised in the *Museums Journal* in November or December 2012.[xii] The aforementioned National Media Museum, whose visitor numbers have halved over the last ten years, is facing yet another restructure with job loses.[xiii]

Adrian Ellis, a leading global museum consultant, has for some years predicted that regional museums and museums in declining post-industrial cities, will simply become receiving houses for touring exhibitions from the super-brand museums. For me, this would be a deeply impoverished museums landscape because while it would be wonderful to see treasures from the British Museum on show in a regional museum, every museum would then tell the story of that object in the same way, as dictated by the brand. The question is about context, and how to make museums unhemmed-in places for voices that are responsive, immediate, powerfully rooted in their local heritage and at the same time global in their connections to the wider human family. Locally rooting museums should be important if we believe that museums are a way to help us understand our place in the world, and become empowered in it. Ellis' vision is certainly a possibility – local to me in 2010, Woodhorn Mining Museum hosted *Walking With Dinosaurs*, which was a BBC/ Natural History Museum enterprise. Already Tate Modern, the British Museum, the Guggenheim, the Louvre etc. vie for global partnerships servicing big spending museums in Hong Kong, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and beyond. Ellis recently said that one problem with such huge scale projects is "Objects have to be significant to drive traffic [. . .] they have to be big enough to engage the world."[xiv] The point here is we, in each individual museum community, need to have conversations about what our values are, who we serve, about who decides what 'significant' objects are, or how we talk about such objects in a local context? Where is the space for these conversations to happen in museums? In reality, for most of us, our challenge is to think about meaningful scales of work that can engage those outside our doors, be locally rooted and create lenses through which our communities make sense of this global world.[xv]

Museums have the potential to be powerful anchors and connectors for humanity through the simple means of stories and objects. No amount of digital technology can power this work if our mission isn't clear (and followed). In the context of many museums today, technology and digital innovation look like clutter and a smokescreen; as soon as the fog lifts that sheen of interaction, conversation, and public serving work falls away, and we are left with one story, one voice, and too often misguided notions of power prestige and status. Museums should listen to those business leaders, such as the branding guru Scott Bedbury who have already re-configured their producer-consumer relationships:

> In times of uncertainty, it pays to study societal values [. . .] As powerful as an emerging technology may be, it must ultimately conform to our values not the reverse [. . .] As technology unfolds, find ways to leverage so as to unleash a core brand value that you already deliver. It is unlikely that new technology will change the values of your brand. It can, however, make these values more deliverable, more accessible, and quite possibly, more relevant.[xvi]

4/ '. . . rather than "build it and they will come," it's more like "let them come and they'll build it!"'[xvii]

Eric Booth's contention that "an individual life that exhibits a balance between heritage and

voice can be thought of as rich and empowered", seems to me to make sense of why both conserving the past and constructing imagined futures are two sides of the same museums project: heritage is at heart a connection to roots and place, and voice is the process of building a future through those connections.

So far I have argued that museums as institutions are incapable of listening; that the tools we most need are those that will enable us to to grow in connectivity and community. There is a low-tech tool with a proven track record of using ordinary voices to build "cultural institutions in their communities, reflecting the unique concerns and passions of the people who live there. With a system of governance based on openness and collaboration, and diverse programming produced by volunteers and funded by listeners".[xviii] It is Community radio, which is a tried and tested tool for 'giving voice to the voiceless', not just for the sake of having done so, but crucially, for the purpose of enabling and fostering genuine capability for conversation, communication and collaborative development.

> UNESCO sees community radio as a medium that gives voice to the voiceless, that serves as the mouthpiece of the marginalized and is at the heart of communication and democratic processes within societies. With community radio, citizens have the means to make their views known . . . notions of transparency and good governance take on new dimensions and democracy is reinforced.[xix]

Throughout the world people recognize that community radio has an exceptional ability to empower people to share their thinking. Community radio is a catalyst for local communities getting involved, it offers opportunities and experiences for people to tell their own stories and histories and talk about what matters to them. By virtue of its purpose and design good community radio does several things well that museums need to strengthen in their core practice:

- Communication & capability – community radio builds skills and discipline in listening and conversation
- Co-operation – it creates an 'open house', and across the community media network there is an ethos of openness and collaboration
- Gets people actively involved in developing interactive communities and improving local governance & democratic discussion – Community broadcast is based on freedom of expression and builds a sense of belonging without sameness. World-wide community radio is a foundation of participatory democracy: through this tool all people have the chance to tell their stories and share their interests, and the people around them have the chance to support this by listening, by calling in etc.
- Creativity – community radio reflects the rich passions of the people who live in a place, potentially enabling them to voice their interests, and potentially links to global concerns and the global community of local radio everywhere

In 2004 Ofcom granted the first community radio licenses in the UK. Today, there are over 200 community radio stations, of which only 18 have failed, Ofcom says that:

> All community radio stations involve volunteers working in various jobs, including presenters and producers. The average station has over 68 volunteers each year, who in total give more than 1,000 hours of their time a month to these community services. The average station broadcasts 91 hours of original content every week, 84 of which are

live. Ofcom estimates that volunteers contribute more than 2 million hours per year to community radio.[xx]

The key point here is that volunteers are 'presenters and producers'. In the 1990s public radio in the US went through severe funding restrictions; through that crisis they developed a way of work that unleashed an audio revolution in user-produced content, and they became 'listener supported'. Initially notions of user collaborations created ructions and fear about producers and other skilled staff becoming redundant. In fact it has re-invigorated and unleashed both the professional producers and the consumers.[xxi]

5/ Conclusion: What if?

I planned to research audio digital models for shared conversation in museums because I wanted to know if museums could be a genuine place for such conversation, and if digital technology could give us the right tools: what if there was a museum in every town that held thousands of stories all told in different voices – a museum that brought to light all those stories that genuinely interact with curatorial skills and collections? What if different ways of knowing and talking continuously shaped and influenced how museums measure our effectiveness and relevance internally? Some of that is already happening, through the practice of community curated exhibitions; such work is, however, very rarely the blockbuster or flagship exhibition in a season, it's always just a first step, and critically it's still not a conversation. A great example of this is the British Museum's BBC Radio 4 *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, which made popular and compelling radio, what would have made it not just another lush exhibition in a different format would have been if it if it was the first step in an interactive conversation, where we could not just broadcast, but receive. Yes, there was an interactive website where people could comment, post photos of their own objects, tell their stories, 350 museum venues around the UK contributed local history & objects. My point is that this was an opportunity for community *response*, but it was not conversation, it did not have a core purpose of feeding back into the institution in ways that were *designed* to shift our storytelling practice and make it conversational and connective.[xxii] The flagship of our sector put one toe in the water of radio, but it should have dived in. Compare the impeccable structure of beginning middle and end, the single expert, or even a spectrum of experts with the runaway phenomenon that is talkSPORT – which last year won three gold awards at the Sony Radio Academy Awards, including Station of the Year, and whose success is based on the call-in interaction where everyone gets to have an opinion and expertise, no just the professional sportspeople and broadcasters.[xxiii]

We really need to demand of ourselves (through new arrangements with funders, measures of accountability, governance etc.) that good practice sets a standard that then becomes a norm, rather than an occasionally surprising achievement. As I researched this paper, minutes into the discussion with almost everybody I spoke with the talk became about how we set controls and moderate the chatter and interaction from communities. However radical, however ambitious in their own participation agenda, nobody asked about how we plan for and foster what Oldenburg calls 'looseness', by which he means spaces created with give-and-take where people are free to be themselves.[xxiv] [xxv]

Researching this paper has opened up an area of work for me where something real has started to happen.

Postscript: Something real starts to happen

8.05am, 11th October, Jarrow: inside the offices at Bede's World, today the work of the museum is different; I have spent an hour talking to two trustees about why we need to listen, and how radio can create a space for conversation and builds capability; one trustee has not spoken for 50 minutes. At last he asks, "How do we listen? I don't mean build an audience, I mean, how do *we* listen?" For me this is the fundamental question.

Using heritage as our hook, and radio as our hammer, we at Bede's World are starting a 6-month pilot using digital tools to build a community radio station inside our museum. We are using online radio as a transformational tool because everyone from age 1 to 100 understands what a radio is, understands the rules of how it creates conversations, and everybody listens to radio in some form. That's distinctive. Radio will be a tool so that we inside listen and learn what our collections and work mean to our community. We are turning the power of transmitter/ receiver on its head. The museum will become an active listener. We will use listening as a tool to drive a process shifting and opening up learning and curatorial practice, and to reshape mission with staff and trustees. The transformation will be changing how the museum listens to, engages with, and is inspired by volunteers and activists of all kinds. This tool will shape the inside of the museum from the core – this is about conversations about core practice – the people around us might not be experts in 7th century glass, but they will be expert in how they want the story told to them. Our ambition is to be an active part of a movement producers and followers for heritage, inspired by the co-operative movement's values and way of work, and ultimately perhaps to become a co-operative business.

For sure, we have a near vertical learning curve in front of us. What we produce will not be polished. It will not be perfect. It will be flawed. But it will be real. And now and again, it may just be beautiful in that ordinary human way. At it's very best it will be a din of conversation, in language and voices that reflect the wideness of the world and the roots of the place. The question of whether digital tools can enable participation that drives practice is not about institutional weight, it's not about commissioning, it's not about what innovative designs we can leverage . . . it's just about seeing what tools we've got, and using them as best we can, because, as a 15 year old volunteer could teach me, "it's not how strong you are, it's how you use the hammer."

ⁱⁱ Quoted in *Expressive Lives* ed. By Samuel Johnson
http://www.demos.co.uk/files/ExpressiveLives_web_ii.pdf?1246871840
ⁱⁱhttp://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/AboutUs/PressOffice/2010/July/WorldRecordBroken.aspx
ⁱⁱⁱ National Media Museum, Strategy & Objectives,
http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/AboutUs/ReportsPlansPolicies/StrategyObjectives.aspx
^{iv} Ray Oldenburg *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (1999), cover statement.

^v http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/101571/Stories-are-for-eternity-when-memory-is-erased-when-there-is-nothing-to-remember-except-the-story.aspx

^{vi} Renaissance North East Museum Awards 2011 http://www.cultureshock.org.uk/home.html
^{vii} *Telling Lives* was a sister project to *Video Nation*, and was a flagship BBC project for 'connecting to communities' and creating user generated content from the early 2000s, and finished in 2005.
^{viii} This is far from a new critique, as early as 1974 Raymond Williams argued that if the terms on which users could make choice were pre-determined and close by institutions, the experience was 'reactive' rather that 'interactive'. While commending the extent to which the BBC succeeded in connecting with communities through the *Capture Wales* project, Jenny Kidd (who also quotes Williams), says the BBC workshops were ultimately 'one-off interactions that can have no real lasting impact upon the 'media' as we know it. They do not leave a more democratic media system in their wake ', Jennifer Kidd, 'Digital

Storytelling@ the BBC: the reality of innovative audience participation' (University of Manchester, 2006), ripeat.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Kidd.pdf

[ix] The lack of conversational capabilities in museum is a crisis that simply cannot be overstated: not only can we not conduct conversations with our users and potential communities, we can't even talk to each other in a trusting way; within institutions and across the sector there are no clear standards for accountability and transparency. See foe example Dr. Bernadette Lynch *Whose Cake is it Anyway?* (Paul Hamlyn Foundation, London: 2009). Lynch's report lead to a major investment programme by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to foster significant action research in participatory practice development, during the past 3 years the programme has floundered, however, because museums simply don't appear to have the tools to conduct honest, or open, conversations of this nature. The ambition of the programme is in part to enable 'organisations to become institutions' and it strikes me that one of the conversations we need to have is about pace, risk, connectivity and the capacities organisations sometime have that get log-jammed in institutional bureaucracies.
http://issuu.com/paulhamlynfoundation/docs/phf_museums_galleries?viewMode=magazine&mode=embed

[x] Openness and enabling different voices in museums are far from standard practice in our sector, and UK wide all funders are now questioning the value to the public of museum funding that does not add real value for local communities. Funders are looking for museums that are successfully bringing user or participant voices into the heart of the core work of collecting and interpreting (e.g. Esme Fairbairn, HLF).

[xi] Elizabeth Price *User Group Disco* (2009) 15-minute film, http://vimeo.com/36307724

[xii] *Museums Journal* November 2012

[xiii] Last month, Heather Mayfield Deputy director of the Science Museum said the NMM was "going back to basics", and she hoped to "reconnect the museum with its audiences and underline its position as a national and international cultural force." BBC News Online, 'National Media Museum in Bradford holds spending review', 11 October 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-19914588

[xiv] http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Hey-big-spenders/26708

[xv] Our sector often frames digital tools as was of 'enhancing visitor experience', creating active audiences, using social media so customers help shape our organisations doing PR, market research etc. We desperately need to stop and research ways that digital tools can become means for us to experience audiences, means for those we serve to teach us new collaborative and conversation skills. In 2010 significant research into cultural sector competencies to lead change identified significant sector weakness in "handling conflict; challenging others in supportive ways; willingness to hold others to account; drawing own boundaries and rules of engagement: coping with ambiguity; working with emergent strategy; spontaneous decision making, telling compelling stories." Roanne Dods and Nadine Andrews, *The People Theme: A Mission Models Money project investigating the competencies, qualities and attributes which will enable creative practitioners and organisations to thrive in the challenging environment of the 21st Century*, p.15
http://www.missionmodelsmoney.org.uk/sites/default/files/MMM_PeopleTheme_FULL_0.pdf

[xvi] Scott Bedbury *A New Brand World* (Penguin, New York: 2002), p. 188. Bedbury is considered a guru of brand leadership, who transformed the consumer-brand relationship by noticing the things about people's desire that everyone else missed.

[xvii] David Gilbert of ArtMobs interviewed by Marymount Manhattan *Monitor* reporter Jill Marino (May 11, 2005) http://mod.blogs.com/art_mobs/. Marino asks Gilbert *What do you want your students to learn from this project?* "Remember that movie Field of Dreams? Well, what I'm saying here is rather than "build it and they will come," it's more like "let them come and they'll build it!"

[xviii] Grassroots Radio Coalition Mission Statement, the Grassroots website was archived in 2009, information can be found here en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grassroots_**Radio**_Coalition, and here http://grassrootsradioconference.org/

[xix] Introduction, *UNESCO Community Radio Handbook* http://www.unesco.org/new/es/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/community-radio-handbook/

[xx] http://radiotoday.co.uk/2012/10/18-community-stations-cease-broadcasting/

[xxi] Jack W. Mitchell gives a fantastic analysis of how public radio became excellent at making work than included marginalised voices, but it was '*by, for and about and not between communities*'. Such work he says achieves nothing, it is conversations and listening where the magic of something new and unexpected happens. See Jack W. Mitchell *Listener Supported the Culture and History of Public Radio* (Prager Publications, Westport: 2005).

[xxii] *A History of the World in 100 Objects* Jan-Oct 2011, www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/

[xxiii] http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/jun/05/talksport-here-come-the-boys

[xxiv] These include Dr. Shamus Smith of Durham University, who spoke to me fantastically about ways of 'augmenting' the *emotional and storied* reality of the museum; Dominic Smith of Tyneside Cinema's Basic FM, an experimental exhibition space for digital audio art; John Cotcher of the wonderful Association of Mature Broadcasters and kick-starter of Vintage Radio, AgeUK; and Brad Klein a creative radio producer who went to develop innovative work with Acoustiguide (museum audio). Klein's *Transom Audio Manifesto* (2006) set out the ways in which his museum audio work and radio can cross paths e.g. through simple devices like creating audio-tours of unscripted spontaneous conversation between 'expert' and 'non-expert'; living artists guiding tours; using oral history to compliment exhibitions etc. - See *The Transom Review* Volume 6/Issue 3 August 24th, 2006 | by Bradley Klein (Edited by Sydney Lewis*). In a generous by brief recent conversation Brad spoke to me about his work with museums in Detroit which worked really carefully and extensively to involve communities in creating audio tours and interpretation, Klein finished with 'but it's not just any stories, the stories have to intersect meaningfully with the collection." He is quite right. This is the role of the curatorial expert; my feeling is however that (a) we need curators with additional and different skills (b) why can't we take some risks about creating a space for mutual conversation and learning that is two way, rather than putting in controls and questions that configure the conversation before it happens.

[xxv] Focus on control and authority is the major site of museums conversation on this issue. For example, Nina Simon (Oct 2008) "I believe we need to develop museum "platforms" that allow us to harness, prioritize, and present the diversity of voices around a given object, exhibit, or idea. This does not mean we are giving all the power to visitors. **We will grant them a few opportunities**--to create their own messages, to prioritize the messages that resonate best for them personally--in the context of a larger overall platform. The platform is what's important. *It's a framework that museums can (and should) control, and there's power in platform management*." She elaborates these powers and says "the power to define the types of interaction available to users. *These powers constitute a set of controls which constitutes a real and valuable authority*." (Emphasis mine)
http://museumtwo.blogspot.co.uk/2008/10/future-of-authority-platform-power.html