



MuSA
museum sector alliance

***W.4.3.1.A CREATIVE THINKING
DEFINITION AND MEANINGS***

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Module:	Creative Thinking skills
Unit:	What is creative thinking?
Learning Object:	Creative thinking definition and meanings
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Abstract:	In this learning object we will explore what we mean by creative thinking and why it matters for everyone of us in order to better face current and shifting challenges – as individuals but also as part of institutions in the service of society.
Keywords:	Creative thinking, innovation, creative potential, problem-solving, thinking outside the box



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Aim and objectives

The aim is to explore what we mean by creative thinking and why it matters for everyone of us in order to better face current and shifting challenges – as individuals but also as part of institutions in the service of society.

Learning outcomes

After studying this resource, you will be able to: indicate two daily work situations creative thinking is a useful or a valuable skill.

Keywords

Creative thinking, innovation, creative potential, problem-solving, thinking outside the box





Figure 1 © Ana Carvalho

What is creative thinking?

We will explore what we mean by **creative thinking** and why it matters for everyone of us in order to better face current and shifting challenges – as individuals but also as part of institutions in the service of society.



Creative thinking is likely to be one of the essential skills for the 21st Century, not just for museum professionals but also for professionals across all areas of our society.

As society changes, an array of new technologies and practices emerge, which require flexibility and improvisation from museums and museum professionals. Creative thinking is one of the skills that are crucial to adapt and respond more effectively to changing realities, whether in digital or non-digital environments.

“Creativity” is a word commonly added and repeated in many areas of life and may have different meanings to different people. So, what exactly do we mean by creativity?

Let us consider, for example, the definition of Linda Norris and Rainey Tisdale in the book “Creativity in Museum Practice”:

“Creativity is about moving humankind forward, building on what has come before. An idea does not have to be mind-blowing transformative to be creative, but it does have to be at least a little new even if it is simply an established idea applied in a new way at your organisation, or a new combination of two previous concepts.”



Figure 2 © Ana Carvalho

Ultimately, creative thinking means to look at problem solving from different perspectives, find new solutions and thinking outside the box. But is also about exploring connections, as Steve Jobs points:

“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That’s because they were able to connect experiences they’ve had and synthesize new things. And the reason they were able to do that was that they’d had more experiences or they have thought more about their experiences than other people.”



Creativity is open to everyone, is not exclusive to artists, meaning that we all have creative potential. As highlighted by the Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho:

“Everybody has a creative potential and from the moment you can express this creative potential you can start changing the world.”

Creative thinking can be understood as a problem-solving skill. In other words, creativity is useful or valuable when there is a problem to solve. In that sense it has many applications in our life, including in our daily work situations in museum behind the scenes.

Bringing creative thinking to the museum practice is about producing new ideas, solutions and perspectives that may add value to any museum activity.

In that way, creative thinking is useful or valuable in several museum daily work situations. For example, when there is a new exhibition to design, a new digital strategy to create or when reframing existing collections around a new theme, rethinking the museum’s mission, embarking in a new programme to attract new audiences, designing innovative interactive experiences or an online audience development plan, and so on.

As a skill, creative thinking can be stimulated and enhanced. As you will learn in this module there are strategies and tools that can help you find your own path in generating new ideas and solutions, and lead you to a meaningful creative practice in museums.

Share your thoughts with us and with other learners if you wish. Do you have another definition of creative thinking to share?



List of references

Norris, L. & Tisdale, R. (2014). *Creativity in Museum Practice*. Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press.

Jobs, S. (1996). In *Wired*, 2-02-1996, from: <https://www.wired.com/1996/02/jobs-2/>

Glossary

Creative thinking: means to look at problems or situations from different perspectives, find new solutions and thinking outside the box.

