

The latest issue of the newly- released [\*Journal of the Visitor Studies Association\*](#) attempts to quantify the problem with a study into broken exhibits at the *Museum of Science*, Boston, Massachusetts.

Data on visitor reactions to broken exhibits were collected via a variety of methods including comment cards, exit interviews and focus groups.

Subsequent analysis of the data revealed how the visitors report and react to less-than-100%-fully-functioning exhibits :

“ They are most often reported when they are non-functional. Partially functioning exhibits and design issues ( such as poor usability and missing or incorrect information ) are also reported, but less frequently. “

The author goes on to discuss methods of reducing the ( negative ) effects of broken exhibits with reference to the [\*Field Guide for the Experience Economy\*](#) (2005) pamphlet.

*Think :*

- Real/Fake Matrix of Authenticity
- Taking Note of the Notable and
- "Ing" the Thing

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## Mirth in Moscow

Many thanks to [\*New Scientist\*](#) for pointing us in the direction of :

[\*‘ Computer Model of a ” Sense of Humour ’. I.\*](#)

*General Algorithm '*

by *I. M. Suslov*, from the *Kapitza Institute for Physical Problems* , Moscow, Russia,

The new paper explains humour thus :

“ The humorous effect is treated as a specific malfunction in the processing of information, conditioned by the necessity of a quick deletion from consciousness of a false version. “

Or, put another way :

“ a sense of humour is biologically conditioned by the necessity to quicken the transmission of information to consciousness and of a more effective use of brain resources . . . ”

The author provides some possible humour-triggering examples :

“ *Is this a place where Duke of Wellington said his famous words ? “*  
“ *Yes, it is the same place but he never said such words. “*

And :

” *My Uncle William has a new cedar chest ”*  
” *So ! Last time I saw him he just had a wooden leg.*”

Readers will no doubt have noted that this new explanation is almost diametrically opposed to the one proposed by *Sigmund Freud* early last century, when he pinpointed :

“ . . . the pleasure obtained from laughter as the main cause of the existence of a sense of humour “ \* see note

For balance then, here's what some say is one of Freud's best jokes from the 1912 edition of his now famous master work : ‘ *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious* ‘

" A man at the dinner table dipped his hands in the

mayonnaise and then ran them through his hair.  
When his neighbor looked astonished, the man  
apologized: " I'm so sorry. I thought it was spinach."

• • •

\* Note :

Sigmund subsequently changed his mind. In his 1927  
essay ' *Humour* ' ; by then he'd determined instead  
that mirth was a way to ward off suffering.

“ The super-ego, like a parent, comforts the  
frightened childlike ego, repudiating reality by  
suggesting that however dangerous the world may  
seem, it is nothing but a game for children. ”

( source : [Marvin Minsky 1980](#) )

[ no, no, please, stop, it's too much ! *Ed.* ]

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De Cecco

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### Writing from Melbourne.

Unfortunately, *Really Magazine* missed the recent  
*International Graphonomics Society* [meeting](#) in  
Melbourne, Australia.

There were a selection of intriguing presentations on  
all things related to handwriting.

For example :

' *Alcohol intoxication and handwriting : spatial  
characteristics* ' ( Monash University )

or :



"the world's best  
commercially produced  
pasta"