



Challenges and Opportunities for Giving Credit in Science Museums



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Interactive digital exhibits are collaborative, public-facing forms of science communication — yet the people behind them are rarely visible.

Same museum. Same people. Completely different crediting norms.



Dome Productions (Planetariums)
Credit reels included after each movie

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Interactive Digital Exhibits
Near-total anonymity, no visible credits

Science museums engage the public with STEM through interactive, digital, and visual experiences. This research began from a discrepancy we noticed in our local museum: **dome shows carry credit reels, but interactive exhibits carry no credits at all** — even when made by the same people.

This opened onto broader questions of **labor, visibility, and how scientific knowledge is publicly presented** in one of its most visited arenas. We use **feminist theory** as our lens — asking not just what is shown, but whose labor made visible, and how power shapes knowledge production.

Background

Setting
Public science museum, jointly run by a city and local university.
200,000+ visitors/year.

Our role
Visualization researchers designing a new exhibit — when we noticed the absence of credits.



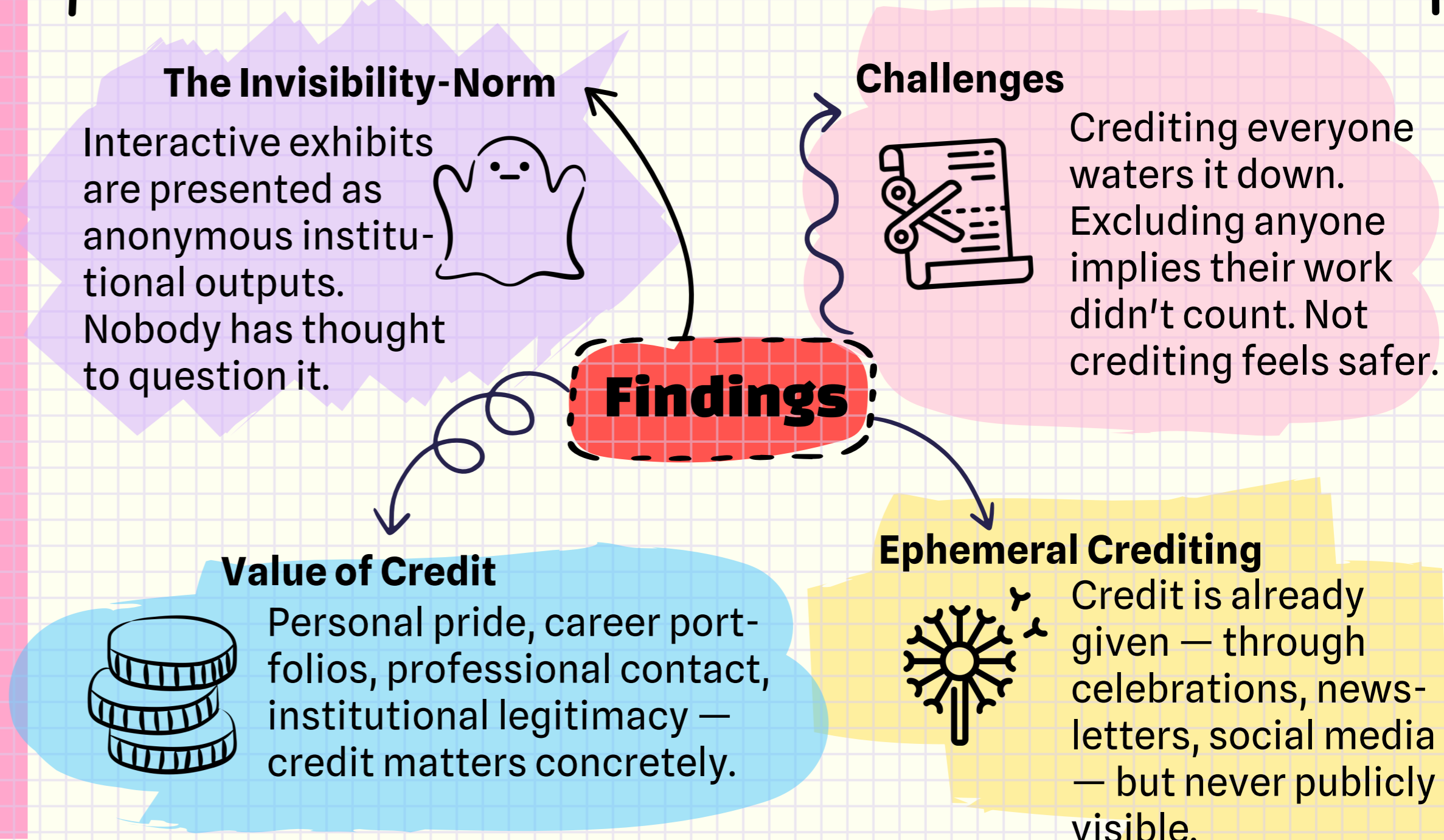
Contributions



- Science museums as a visualization context**
Rich, underexplored sites for questions of labor, visibility, and knowledge production.
- A gap in visible crediting**
A consistent absence of attribution for interactive exhibits — sector-wide, not just local.
- Why that gap persists**
Cultural, organizational, and practical challenges — not deliberate intent.
- A design opportunity**
Credit as missing data — with concrete implications for visualization design and museum practice.

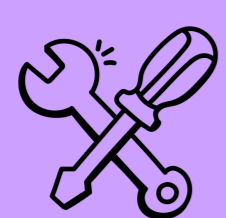
Method

- 11 Interviews
- 2 Countries
- 4 Museums
- ~1hr per interview



Discussion — A Design Space for Credit

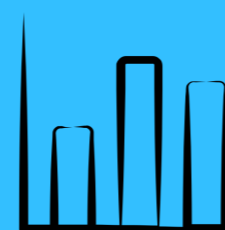
Three interconnected opportunities for visualization research



Opportunity 1 Producing Credit Data

Credit isn't waiting to be recorded — it must be negotiated. Contributions are distributed, roles are fluid, and what "counts" is contested.

- Design **input visualizations** that support ongoing negotiation of credit — not just collection of pre-defined roles.
- Treat credit as **data as design material**: actively constructed, not pre-structured.



Opportunity 2 Visualizing Credit

List-based credit reproduces hierarchy. Visualization can do better — representing contribution as **relational, temporal, and explorable**.

- Temporal: show activity over time (à la GitHub contributions), not a ranked final list.
- Embedded: weave credit into the exhibit experience itself, not appended as afterthought.



Opportunity 3 Socio-Technical Change

No technical solution alone is sufficient. The gap is **organizational and cultural** — no policies, no pipelines, no designated ownership.

- Community-wide sector guidelines for crediting interactive exhibits.
- Making science production visible to the public — positioning museums as spaces that reveal **how** science is made, not just what it finds.

Credit is not a finishing touch — it is a **representational choice with epistemic consequences**. It shapes how we communicate not only the **outcomes** of science, but the processes and people that produce it. **Science doesn't just happen. It's made by people. Making that visible is an important role for visualization.**