Elisabeth Sylvan, PhD

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Overview

Summary: 20+ years as leader, researcher, and educator. PhD from MIT Media Lab, VP of Education at The Tech Museum of Innovation, and Project Director and Research Scientist at TERC.

Leadership: Overseeing multifunctional teams of up to 35. Leading multiple projects at once. Building capacity through active listening for projects' and team members' needs. Accomplishing goals through partnerships and community engagement.

Domain expertise: Sociotechnical systems, human computer interaction, maker education and hacker culture, data literacy, learning communities, computational thinking, learning sciences, and behavioral economics.

Other Skills: Grant writing. Workshopping and facilitating group events and classes. User experience research. Curriculum development. Mixed methods research including ethnographic study, participatory design, experimental design, and surveys.

Experience

ELISABETH SYLVAN CONSULTING LLC, *Boston & San Francisco*   2011 – Present
Principal

I help organizations to design and develop technological tools and programs that support community-based creation. I provide strategy development, insights about current sociotechnical and education trends, research design, user experience research, and early technology prototyping for community-focused nonprofits, museums, multinational corporations, and innovative schools. I often play the role of a 'critical friend' to leaders and teams, helping them to define their strengths and goals within a broader context and to develop strategies to implement the goals. Please see http://www.lisard.com for client and project details.

MANYLABS, *San Francisco*   2014 – 2017
Director of Learning and Community & Scientist in Residence

I joined Manylabs when it was a new nonprofit that made open science tools. To help the organization establish itself, I defined a brand and product line, wrote foundation, corporate and NSF grants, built relationships with partners, and established common practices and events for the community. I supported advocacy groups, educators, and engaged citizens to answer real-world questions using scientific data.

THE TECH MUSEUM OF INNOVATION, *San Jose*   2013 – 2014
Vice President of Education

I joined The Tech Museum to reestablish an education department that had not existed for many years. Based on the museum's mission and organizational goals, I developed a vision and strategy for education at The Tech. To execute that strategy I hired a team, both internally and externally, across five areas: Gallery Programming, Labs, Field Trips, School and After-school Programs, and The Tech Challenge.

Under my leadership the education team executed a cohesive set of educational programs with clear short and long goals for revenue, programming, and staffing. For example, we expanded our signature weekend long event, The Tech Challenge, to be a full-year initiative with a five-year plan. We also developed a new gallery and lab staffing system which increased pay and created a new advancement for part-time junior staff, making the museum a more competitive employer and improving the experience of museum visitors.

TERC, *Cambridge*   2008 – 2013
Project Director & Research Scientist
As a Project Director I ran a 3-year multi-million dollar NSF-funded STEM educational R&D project for youth survey research. Deliverables included software, curriculum, learning analytics, and outreach, executed by a team of a dozen staff and contractors. As a Research Scientist I analyzed STEM educational games, co-developed and ran Scratch workshops, co-developed a company-wide plan for e-publishing, and developed and implemented external evaluations for clients.

MIT MEDIA LAB, *Cambridge*   2000 – 2007
Graduate Student Research Assistant
My dissertation examined influence and interaction in 'Online Communities of Creators,' sociotechnical systems that support sharing creative content. My general exams were on supporting community-enabled group learning and creativity within physical, social, and technological context. I ran hands-on STEAM workshops around the world. I taught a graduate Research Methods class and co-founded Mediawomen, a social and advocacy group for women in technology.

EARLY RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY ROLES   1996 – 2001
I was Empirical Research Manager for the Gesture and Narrative Language group at the MIT Media Lab, a web designer and webmaster for MIT Sea Grant MIT, and a project manager and web designer at dot.com startups.

Education
Massachusetts Institute of Technology: MIT Media Laboratory
Ph.D. Media Arts & Sciences   2007
Dissertation: The Sharing of Wonderful Ideas: Influence and Interaction in Online Communities of Creators.
Advisor: Mitch Resnick

M.S. Media Arts & Sciences   2003
Thesis: Analyzing and Designing for Task Switching at Work.
Advisor: Dan Ariely

Carnegie Mellon University   1996
BS. In Psychology

Leadership
Frequent invited speaker including at Berkeley, SRI, FXPAL, Exploratorium, Disney, IBM, MIT, Harvard, Georgia Tech, and more.

Conference paper and grant reviewer and conference program committee member. NSF Peer Reviewer, Conference reviewer for Computer Human Interaction (CHI), Internet Research, Computer-Supported Collaborative Work, Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning, International Conference on the Learning Sciences.

Volunteer mentor for technology professionals through Mozilla Open Leaders program and the Jewish High Tech Council.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) member at TERC and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Professional Memberships: Association for Computing Machinery. SIGCHI. Association of Internet Researchers. International Society of the Learning Sciences, Computer Using Educators.

Authored 20+ peer-reviewed publications in Human Computer Interaction, Internet Research, Education Technology and the Learning Sciences. Please see my website: http://lisard.com for publications.