

Where's Everybody?

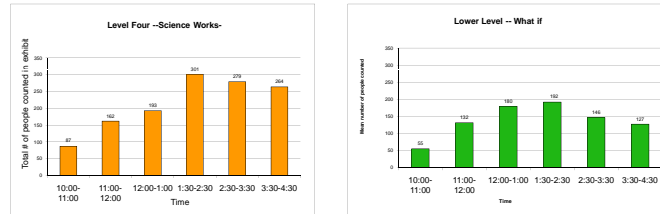
An Analysis and Interpretation of Visitor Flow of Program Scheduling, Staffing and Attendance

Elizabeth (Elee) Wood, PhD Public Scholar of Museums, Families and Learning, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Assistant Professor of Museum Studies and Teacher Education, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

The **Where's Everybody Study** (Wolf & Wood, 2008) at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis included a full-scale examination of visitor flow and capture rates, as well as an analysis of exhibit-based interpretation program scheduling, staffing, and attendance. Based on nearly 60,000 visitor observations and review of departmental records over a 7-day sample, a clear and consistent visitor pattern emerged which was markedly different from departmental and museum-wide assumptions about program attendance.

Visitors at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis *conclude* their visit at the uppermost reaches of the building. This challenges the idea that visitors "start at the top and work their way down."

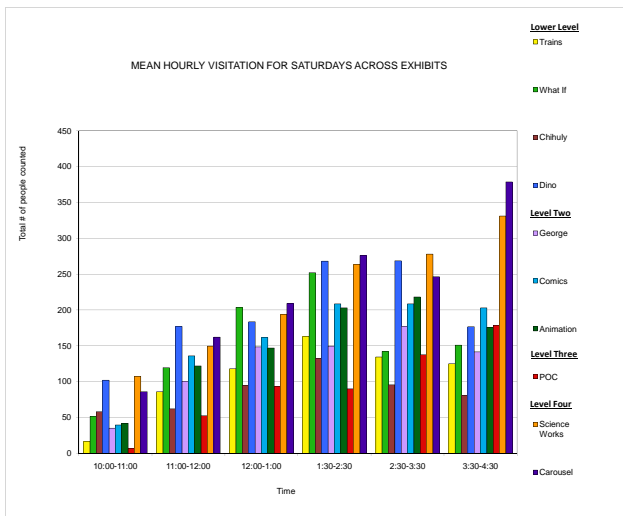
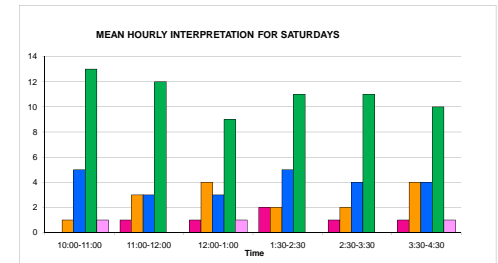
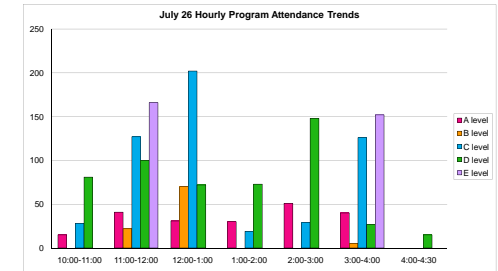
Top to Bottom Comparison



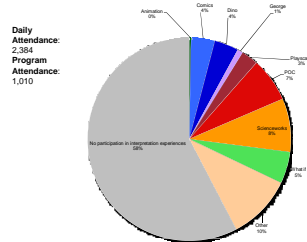
By examining program attendance by exhibition, type of program, and time of day the research team provided museum staff with highly-grounded information on visitor attendance behaviors. Through discussion and review of the data, multiple museum departments now have baseline operations information that are being used to revise staffing, program scheduling, and gallery facilitation.

Visitors are just as likely to attend a program on a significantly busy day as they are on a slow day. This debunks the idea that visitors will not attend programs under crowded conditions.

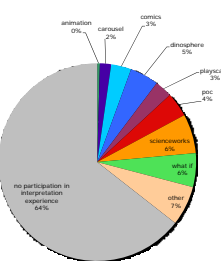
Program Attendance by Type



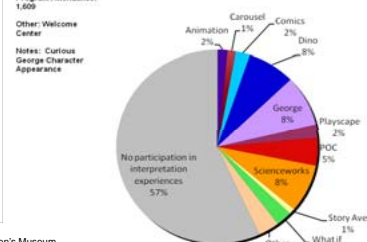
June 22 Program Attendance by Exhibit



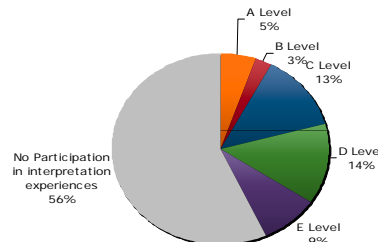
August 5 Program Attendance by Exhibit



July 26 Program Attendance by Exhibit



July 26 Program Attendance by Type



Program types:

- A Museum theatre/full immersion
- B Theatrical Techniques/partial immersion
- C Theatrical techniques/limited immersion/workshop
- D Greet, host, provide information, answer questions, gallery maintenance
- E Mascots in costumes

While several assumptions about visitor behavior may be used in developing program and staffing schedules, the results of this study show a considerably different picture and offer a number of challenges. Collective understanding of program goals and objectives, as well as consistent data collection techniques are imperative for institutional accountability and measurement of impact.

