

## **The Next Generation of Visitors: Creating Experiences for Millennials**

AAM 2010 Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA

Monday, May 24, 2010

9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

### **Presenters:**

**Jessica Sickler (session chair)**

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**Ellen M. Rosenthal**

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### **Session Outline:**

**Jessica Sickler, Institute for Learning Innovation**

*Session Overview*

This presentation will provide an overview and introduction to the session's topic, themes, and presenters. The session will begin with a discussion of the rationale for this session – addressing the question of why understanding the Millennial generation matters to museums in the present and the future. This overview will highlight the key topics and questions that will be addressed by panelists, as well as share results from a recent Institute for Learning Innovation study with Millennials (middle and high school students) at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, highlighting several key attributes of Millennials' perceptions of museum experiences.

**Sylvia Matiko, A Different View**

*Millennials: Understanding the Research*

This presentation will provide an overview of research findings about Millennials, drawing upon recent market and consumer trends research from a variety of sources. Sylvia's presentation will help define who comprises the Millennial Generation and their preferences for experiences, providing examples and results from research throughout the discussion. Key points that will be addressed include:

- Defining who Millennials are, relative to previous generations
- Describing events that have influenced their lives and perspectives
  - World events
  - Technology
  - Parenting and Educational Styles
- Describing differences in their attitudes about the world and their lives
  - Environmental consciousness
  - Goals for work and life
  - Learning styles and preferences
- Describing their behaviors and preferences
  - Leisure activities
  - Appealing attributes for events, experiences, brands

Woven throughout this presentation, our panel of Millennials will help describe their perspectives on these key points and opinions about what is important in creating compelling experiences.

**Linda Wilson, John G. Shedd Aquarium**  
*Serving Millennials: Serving All*

Linda will share two case studies about how the Shedd Aquarium has explored the response of visitors from within the Millennial generation to existing program and exhibit experiences that were originally designed to serve non-Millennial audiences. The two case studies are:

- Polar Play Zone – an exhibit designed for children aged 2 – 7 years, but which the Aquarium discovered was also serving the 9 – 12 year-olds, the youngest members of the Millennial generation
- Fantasea – a live animal program designed to serve families, but has been attended by many Millennials without children

This presentation will present preliminary evaluation data about how audiences representing the Millennial generation have responded to these two aquarium experiences. Shedd Aquarium’s experience considers how to leverage an institution’s existing resources to determine its strengths for further serving of Millennial needs, as well as raising the question about meeting different audiences needs when those needs are in conflict.

**Ellen M. Rosenthal, Conner Prairie, Interactive History Park**  
*Are Millennials out of Reach for History Museums?*

Ellen will present a case study about the experience of Conner Prairie Interactive History Park, relating to increasing the institution’s appeal to audiences within the Millennial generation. As a largely family-focused destination, Conner Prairie reflects on the challenge of attracting families as children enter their teen and young adult years, including sharing actual teen responses about their impressions of Conner Prairie and its lack of relevance to them. Ellen’s presentation will focus on helping attract family audiences by creating experiences that help overcome the “veto vote” by teens and youth, which may create a barrier to a family visit, including the evidence of the impact on visitation and Millennial visitors’ impressions of a newly installed historic experience, the 1859 Balloon Voyage, which has seemed to broaden the museum’s audience.

## **Additional Handouts:**

“Creating Experiences for the Millennials” – article from *In Park* magazine by Georgina Parfitt, a millennial and researcher from A Different View.

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## **About the Presenters:**

Jessica Sickler is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Learning Innovation and has been a museum educator, researcher, and evaluator for 8 years. Recent work has explored experiences that comprise visitor enjoyment and motivation, as well as how to transform research findings into practice. She is also trained as a classroom teacher, with an M.S.Ed. in Museum Education from Bank Street College of Education and a B.A. in Environmental Analysis and Policy from Boston University.

Sylvia Matiko is co-founder and principal of A Different View, an international management consultancy that helps museums and visitor attractions worldwide to define, deliver, and evaluate visitor experience. ADV uses Experience DNA, a scientific evaluation tool that measures visitor experience by 8 different age groups. Sylvia has worked with museums, zoos, and aquariums in helping them to better define their audience and their expectations in order to help achieve organizational goals.

Linda Wilson is Director of Audience Research and Evaluation at Shedd Aquarium. The aquarium has been collecting systematic information on its guests for 15 years and regularly evaluates exhibits, programs and experiences using internal and external evaluators. Linda's research interests for 2010 include the changing role of information in institutions with living collections and increasing civic engagement through museums.

Ellen M. Rosenthal is President & CEO of Conner Prairie, Interactive History Park and has worked in museums for more than 25 years. She holds a B.A. in art history, a M.A. in Early American Culture, and a MPM. She worked at several historical centers before coming to Conner Prairie in 1999. For the past decade, Ellen has pursued an interest in museum learning and visitor behavior, writing and speaking widely on studies at Conner Prairie and subsequent changes made to improve visitor experience.