

Visitor Studies 101: Collecting and Interpreting Visitor Data
2010 AAM Annual Meeting – Los Angeles, CA
Tuesday, May 25, 2010
9:00 - 10:15 AM

Chair

Elizabeth Kunz Kollmann, Senior Research & Evaluation Associate
Museum of Science, Boston, MA
(ekollmann@mos.org)

Presenters

- Elisa Israel, Associate Director, Research and Evaluation
Saint Louis Science Center, Saint Louis, MO
(eisrael@slsc.org)
- Johanna Jones, Managing Director
Randi Korn & Associates, San Francisco, CA
(jones@randikorn.com)
- Wendy Meluch, Evaluation Consultant
Visitor Studies Services, Novato, CA
(wendy@visitorstudies.com)

Session Purpose

It is important for any museum to understand its visitors: who they are, what they want, and how they learn. This session will give an introduction to collecting and understanding visitor data. It will include descriptions of different ways to collect data from and about visitors including interviews, surveys, observations, and focus groups. Content will cover the kinds of information that can be collected through each of these tools and how to understand and utilize visitor data.

Presentation Outline

- Introduction to visitor studies (Elizabeth Kunz Kollmann)*
 - What is visitor studies?
 - What are some types of visitor studies?
 - When do visitor studies typically take place?
- Talking with visitors (Wendy Meluch)
 - Interviews
 - Questionnaires
 - Focus groups
- Observing visitors (Johanna Jones)
 - Timing & tracking
 - Naturalistic observations

* Handouts are available for these presentations through the AAM Handouts-On-Demand system.

- Collecting long-term data from visitors (Elisa Israel) *
 - Comment cards
 - Educational program assessment
- Questions & answers

Visitor Studies Resources

- Visitor Studies Organizations
 - AAM's Committee on Audience Research and Evaluation (CARE): <http://www.care-aam.org/>
 - Visitor Studies Association (VSA): <http://www.visitorstudies.org>
 - American Evaluation Association (AEA): <http://www.eval.org/>
- How-To Guides
 - *Introduction to Museum Evaluation* edited by Minda Borun and Randi Korn
 - *Practical Evaluation Guide* by Judy Diamond, Jessica J. Luke, & David H. Uttal
 - *Questioning Assumptions* by Lynn Dierking and Wendy Pollock
 - *Paying Attention to Museum Visitors* by Beverly Serrell
 - *Try It!* by Samuel Taylor
 - *Framework for Evaluating Impacts of Informal Science Education Projects* edited by Alan J. Friedman: http://www.informalscience.org/evaluations/eval_framework.pdf
- Museum Research and Evaluation
 - *Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits* edited by Philip Bell, Bruce Lewenstein, Andrew W. Shouse, and Michael A. Feder
 - *Family Learning in Museums* by Minda Borun et. al.
 - *In Principle, In Practice* edited by John Falk, Lynn Dierking, and Susan Foutz
 - *Paying Attention to Museum Visitors* by Beverly Serrell
 - Informal Science: <http://www.informalscience.org>
 - ExhibitFiles: <http://www.exhibitfiles.org>

* Handouts are available for these presentations through the AAM Handouts-On-Demand system.