

figures but also answers technical questions from foreign and domestic museums and organizations.

Thus, the Institut für Museumskunde in Berlin sees itself as a partner to the federal government, the states, and the representatives of towns and villages in all questions of museum planning, documentation, and cultural statistics.

**The Work of the Department
"Besucherbezogene Museums-
forschung und Kulturstatistik"
(Visitor-Related Museum Research
and Cultural Statistics) at the
Institut für Museumskunde
(Institute of Museum Studies)**

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Collection of Data on Museum Visits and Related Projects

One of their chief activities of this department is the annual gathering of figures on visits at all museums in the Federal Republic of Germany, a practice begun in 1981.

In addition to the standard questions, the museums are surveyed on a special topic every year. Topics include the changing of long-term exhibits, education in museums, and public relations work. These question sets are repeated at intervals of several years, so comparative data are available on many of the questions.

The results of these questionnaires are published in a series called *Materialien aus dem Institut für Museumskunde* and sent to all museums. Simultaneously, this publication makes statistically reliable data available to the museum proprietors or holders, museum associations, and cultural offices. The results are included in the official statistics of the federal bureau of statistics every year and are published in the statistical *Jahrbuch der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Yearbook of the Federal Republic of Germany). Likewise, a number of state statistics bureaus request the data for their state so they can include them in their statistics.

In order to carry out the visitor data collection, it was necessary to compile a data base of addresses, information on main collections, and museum holders. In 1981, this data-bank encompassed 2,247 museums; as of 1995, the number has risen to 5,097. The regular gathering of data from all museums makes it possible to continually update and expand the "institutional documentation."

Now that full statistics exist for a series of years without interruption, the yearly results must be accompanied by interpretive research. If one considers only the results of the annual collection of figures on visits, one finds a steady increase in the number of visits from year to year. However,

the investigations and trend analyses undertaken in conjunction with the University of Bochum (Profs. Treinen and Kromrey), which began in the late 1980s and still continue, show distinct development patterns for different groups of museums. For instance, museums that have closed for moving, total overhaul of exhibits, or major remodeling and then reopen experience a clear increase in visits at first. In the following years the number of visits decreases somewhat but normally stabilizes at a higher level than that recorded before closure.

Visitor Research Projects and Collaboration with Other Institutions

In recent years, a number of visitor research projects on various subjects, some of several years' duration, have been carried out in conjunction with external partners. Let us take two of the bigger projects as examples: First, the empirical study "Trend Analysis of Visitor Structures" was initiated by the department together with the museum offices of Rhineland and Westphalia-Lippe, and was conducted by the Department of Sociology of the University of Karlsruhe. In nine campaigns distributed over a period of three years, at a total of 40 museums, more than 55,000 questionnaires were filled out by museumgoers. The results of this extensive project were published by Prof. Klein in the series "Berliner Schriften zur Museumskunde," brought out by the Institut für Museumskunde, under the title "Der gläserne Besucher" (The Glass Visitor). Second, the evaluation project "New Methods of Exhibition Planning in Museums" was also carried out by the University of Karlsruhe. It is described elsewhere in this volume.

The results of the Institute for Museum Studies work are disseminated partly through publications and colloquia, but the primary channel is the advising of external projects and institutions. Of special interest is a bibliography covering museology, museum education, and visitor research, which was first published in 1987. In 1993 the third edition appeared, expanded and enriched with key words. The research for this bibliography is an ongoing task.

Long-Term Research Topics: Perspectives

In future the principal assignment of this department will remain the annual visit figure collection. In addition, the continuation of the accompanying interpretive research is an absolute necessity. As in the past, this will require the following:

- Time series analyses of the individual years. The final results (by Treinen and Kromrey) have already shown that more in-depth analyses may yield information relevant to planning that can be used by groups of museums, museum holders, and cultural management bureaus.

- Polls of visitors at permanent and temporary exhibits and special exhibits. These should illuminate the visitor structure and monitor acceptance of certain kinds of exhibits

and types of museums, thereby paving the way for public-oriented museums.

-Evaluative projects. Evaluation work is especially useful for the development of new museum and exhibition conceptions.

By combining these different investigative bases, the department hopes to make available to the museums the most comprehensive information and feedback possible.

Promenading in Picture Rooms: Evaluation of the Exhibition "1944-1952 Schau-Platz Südwest"

Matthias Kehle
Karlsruhe, Germany

In 1992, a pilot exhibition was put on in Stuttgart by the *Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg* on the founding of the newly defined federal state after the Second World War. The "Historical Exhibition of a New Type: 1944-1952 *Schau-Platz Südwest*" was unusual in its "consistent, all-encompassing interpretation of the principle of *Inszenierung* (immersion) in the form of traversable 'picture rooms,' combined with an intentional lack of verbal explanations of that represented." The historical facts were thus portrayed exclusively by means of *Inszenierungen*, which sometimes took abstract form, in combination with the acoustic cross fade of excerpts from speeches by important state politicians and the display of original documents, letters, flyers, and official announcements. For the visitor this means that there were no "instructions for use," clarifications, aids to orientation, or explanations of the significance of contexts. In other words, almost no didactic help was provided.

In the course of an analogical-comparative evaluation (ACE; see Klein 1993) undertaken by the Department of Sociology of the University of Karlsruhe, this exhibition was one of those evaluated. The research design called for observations in one of the rooms and at one particularly ambiguous *Inszenierung*, as well as partly standardized interviews lasting about twenty minutes.

Two-thirds of the visitors viewed the lack of explanatory texts as a deficiency. Beyond this, they were downright "eager" to read the original documents. Three out of ten visitors were able to name and describe the content of several different pieces; only every fifth person could not recall a single text. Although many of the visitors "liked" all or part of the exhibition, few were able to interpret the content of the *Inszenierungen* correctly. For instance, only 16% recognized an empty shop counter as a symbol of the coming currency reform: the merchants had hoarded their wares behind the counter, in order to sell them later at a greater profit. The most abstract *Inszenierung*, consisting of several large beams from a barn in which refugees had incised texts and bearing two original documents, was interpreted correctly by only 5% of those surveyed—and then often only because the exhibition

and this *Inszenierung* in particular had been reported on both television and in the press. A further weakness of the exhibition was that the various sound documents in the room drowned each other out and it was usually impossible to listen to the voices emanating from hidden loudspeakers. Thus, despite the fact that the majority of the visitors did "like" the exhibition, the concept must be considered a "failure." Without explanatory texts, learning in a museum appears to be impossible.

Visitor Studies Pre-Conference Workshops Friday and Saturday, August 23 & 24

Friday:

Overview of Exhibit Evaluation and Critical Appraisal
Stephen Bitgood & Harris Shettel

Designing Questionnaires That Produce Useful Results
Marilyn G. Hood

Techniques for Qualitative Interviews
Randi Korn

How to Plan and Conduct Focus Group Interviews
Richard A. Krueger

Strategies for Bridging Visitor Studies & Marketing Research
Ross J. Loomis & Carol Saunders

Designing for Conversation: Facilitating Meaningful Social Interaction
Kristine Morrissey & Deborah Perry

Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach For Writers
Beverly Serrell

Creativity 202-A: Helping Interpreters Reawaken the Right Brain
Florence Bramley-Hill

Saturday:

Utilizing Visitor and Market Research
G. Donald Adams

Improving Completed Exhibits: Remedial Evaluation
Stephen Bitgood & Harris Shettel

Front-End Evaluation: A Vital Process for Exhibit and Program Planning, Minda Borun

Implementing Procedures in Audience Research
Marilyn G. Hood

How to Plan and Conduct Focus Group Interviews
Richard A. Krueger

Customer Service at Museums?!
Susan M. Ward

Learning Styles, the MBTI and Creative Museum Experiences
Douglas Worts

Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach For Exhibit Designers
Beverly Serrell

Creativity 202-B: The Fun of Developing Effective Exhibits
Florence Bramley-Hill

See page 15 for more information about
the 1996 Visitor Studies Conference